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**Seeing Beauty in a Face:  
A Framework for Poetry Translation & Its  
Criticism**

by

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## **Abstract**

The thesis aims to propose a framework for poetry translation and its criticism. It is demonstrated how criticism on poetry translation can discuss the source text and target text in a way that they may well be two pieces of prose and miss a very important point: their aesthetic value as poetry. The thesis goes on to investigate an important issue of poetry translation: what makes poetry poetry. For if poetry is to be translated into poetry and criticized as poetry, this will be a highly relevant issue. An investigation into both Chinese and Western traditions shows that the common ground shared is that poetry in a poem is something holistic and coming from those aesthetically effective contextual relations from the poem. Gestalt Theory is introduced as the backbone of the framework to embody how those contextual relations function and a new term for the poetry one reads in a poem is coined, poestalt—combining poem and gestalt. The framework then is applied to investigate three issues and its significance to the criticism of poetry translation: Firstly, how poestalt may emerge and the condition for this to happen, i.e. aesthetic coherence. Secondly, the significance of the creative involvement of the reader/translators, which is an important element of poetry reading/translation. Thirdly, the nature of the contextual relation and poestalt, which is highly related to the former two issues. With this framework, the thesis shows that the poestalt emerging from the source text is the relevant object of poetry translation and its comparison with the poestalt emerging from the target text is the object for the criticism of poetry translation.

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## Some Points on the Format and Presentation

All translations, literal translation, transliterations, and rearrangements of an example text are by the author of the thesis unless stated otherwise.

For a consistent visual environment, any Chinese texts or characters in the main text will be transliterated and italicized and/or literally translated, with the original characters of the Chinese provided in footnotes, e.g. *shige yanjiu*.<sup>1</sup> The parenthesis following an italicized transliteration, if there is one and unless otherwise noted, is its English literal translation, e.g. *shige yanjiu* (poetry study).

Any transliteration of Chinese terms and text will follow the Pinyin system. Since the Chinese characters are provided in footnotes, there will be no other transliteration other than this version if there is other standing transliteration. Since no transliteration can represent exactly what the original voice may sound like, explanation will be provided when the difference will interfere the understanding of my argument or discussion in question. For example, *liu* may sound quite differently from *shou* if read as spelled, but, in fact, rhymes with the latter. For it stands for the characters read /liou/ and is shortened as a rule of this system in presentation.

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<sup>1</sup> I.e. 詩歌研究.

As Chinese is notoriously homophonic, Chinese names will be given in full form  
instead of just the surname.

Original classical Chinese texts will be provided non-punctuated.

All years will be ones after the birth of Christ if not otherwise noted.

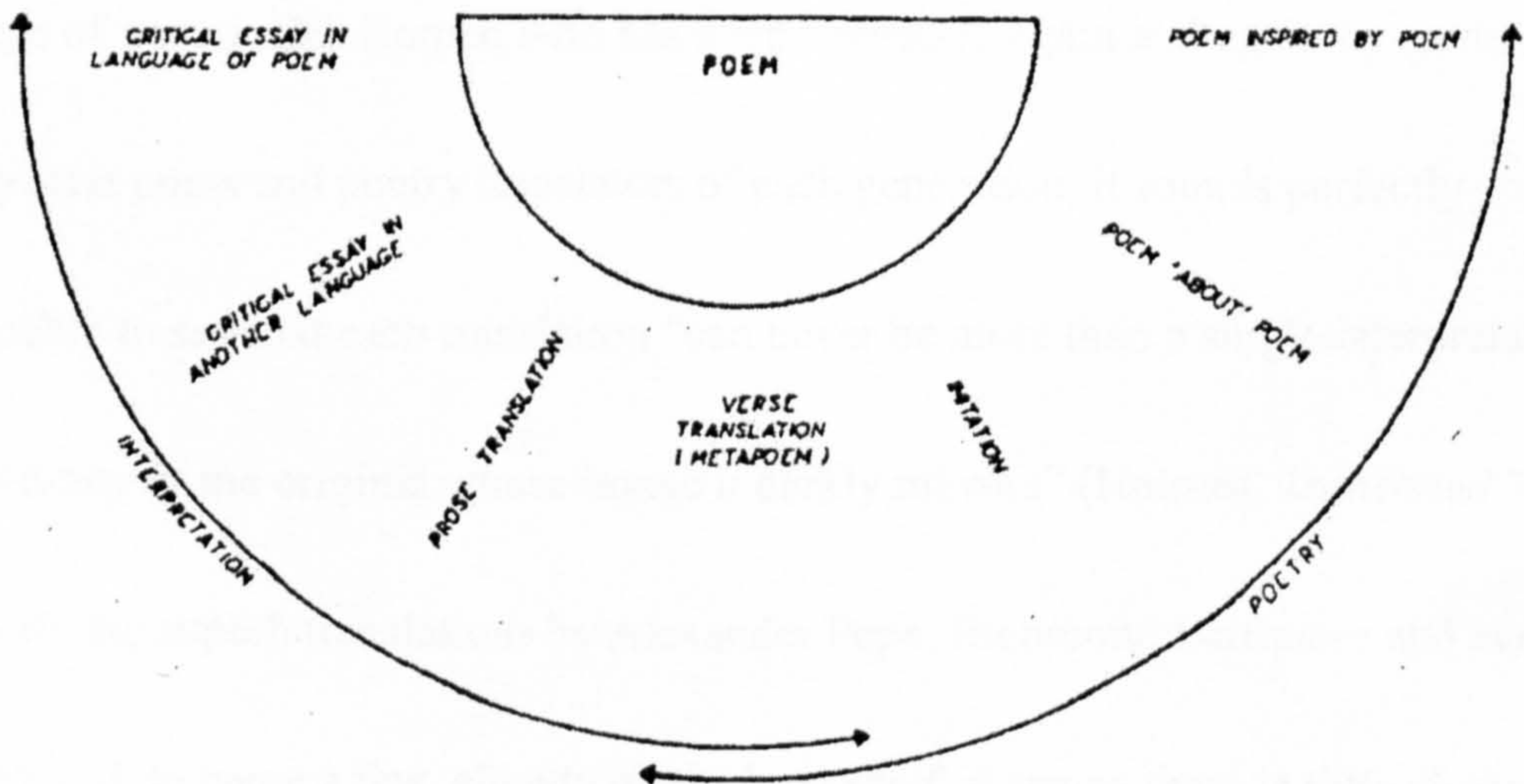


# Introduction

James Holmes produces a groundbreaking “fan of meta-literary forms”<sup>2</sup> that explains the relationship between poetry and different types of poetry translation. The last part of this investigation<sup>3</sup> is a showcase of three types of forms for translating poetry, i.e. analogical, mimetic and organic. Holmes starts the ending paragraph by stating, “As these three quotations emphasize, there is an extremely close relationship between the kind of verse form a translator chooses and the kind of total effect his translation achieves” (*Translated* 30). What the “total effect” of the translation is and where it comes from is untouched. Where Holmes leaves his investigation is where the investigation of this thesis begins.

However, there is a difference in our concepts concerning the relationship

<sup>2</sup> See Holmes, *Translated!* 23-4.



<sup>3</sup> See Holmes, *Translated!* 23-33.

between the source text and its target texts, which is highly related to the aim of the thesis. Holmes argues, "... all translation is an act of critical interpretation, but there are some translations of poetry which differ from all other interpretative forms in that they also have the aim of being acts of poetry..." [my underlining] (*Translated* 24).

The thesis agrees that critical interpretation is a prerequisite in all poetry translation, regardless of form, and any translation can be accepted as a critical interpretation of the source text. However, the thesis argues that being "acts of poetry" is the purpose of poetry translation when a poem is to be translated into a poem, instead of just a by-product as "also" may suggest. So long as a target text is supposed to stand on its own as a poem, the translation has to be an act of poetry. Therefore, the thesis is more interested in how the "total effect" of the target text as a poem corresponds with that of the source text.

In fact, the relationship between a poem and its translations varies widely. In the case of a work like Homer, who has been translated again and again by some of the greatest poets and poetry translators of each generation, it sounds perfectly reasonable to say that each translation "can never be more than a single interpretation out of many of the original whose image it darkly mirrors" (Holmes, *Translated* 30). For, with the superb translations by Alexander Pope, Richmond Lattimore and even Ezra Pound, to name a few, already on the bookshelf, it seems there is little chance in



the foreseeable future that any new translation can stay as a definitive translation for good. However, it seems to be a different story in the case of the *rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam. There may have been other English translations before and after Edward FitzGerald's, but, as FitzGerald's is canonized as part of English literature,<sup>4</sup> it does not sound pertinent to describe its status with the remarks applied on Homer's translations, for it is admired much more for its own aesthetic value than how it mirrors the original, darkly or not.<sup>5</sup> Ezra Pound's translation of Li Bai's "*Chang Gan Xing*" ("The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter") is a similar case. As it is now canonized as part of American literary tradition,<sup>6</sup> this translation is in a different place from other translations that are struggling with the fate of oblivion.<sup>7</sup>

As Holmes points out, in the past, mimetic and analogical forms prevailed at certain times because of a certain cultural context, hence Pope chose heroic couplets for his *Iliad*. Holmes suggests that weaker target cultures tended to adopt a mimetic forms of translation to enrich themselves (Translated! 27-8). Holmes also notes that similar strategies are still much alive today. The translation of Edward FitzGerald's

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<sup>4</sup> See Huang Kesun, the introduction. In fact, "FitzGerald was continuing an interest in English translations of oriental poetry that began with Sir William Jones (1749-94), ... but FitzGerald's is the only Victorian oriental verse translation that has established itself as an English classic." (George in Cronin 173).

<sup>5</sup> In fact, as Robert Graves points out, FitzGerald is the first translator to present Omar Khayyam as a blasphemer (Graves, 37). The poet may be a protestor against the hypocrisy of the religious authority and an innovating thinker, but not a blasphemer. See introduction Zhang Hongnian.

<sup>6</sup> The translation is now included in widely used authoritative anthologies of American literature, such as *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*.

<sup>7</sup> However, when we are talking about the translation of Li Bai in terms of the whole of his corpus, the case will be more like that of Homer. Every generation may have its own translation of the corpus of Li Bai.

*The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam* into Chinese in the twentieth century presents a similar strategy. Huang Kesun, in the mid 1950's, used seven-character *jueju* (quatrain) of the Tang dynasty, an obsolete archaic traditional genre, to translate Edward FitzGerald's *The Ruba'iyat* when most translators since the 1920's onwards have used the form of *baihua shi* (i.e. poetry in vernacular Chinese<sup>8</sup>) to translate Western poetry, including FitzGerald.<sup>9</sup> Despite this norm, Huang's translation in *jueju* has definitely been one of the most discussed and read translations of FitzGerald<sup>10</sup> and one of few that continue to be in demand.<sup>11</sup> Curiously, in 2003, another translation adopting *jueju* by Fu Yiqin appeared, again, despite the norm of using *baihua shi*.<sup>12</sup> Why this is the case and what issues related to historical context

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<sup>8</sup> It is more or less like free verse, without tonal pattern and fixed rhyme scheme and modern Chinese, developed after the archaic Chinese was abolished as official style with the Qing dynasty

<sup>9</sup> A list of Chinese translators of FitzGerald includes some of the greatest writers of modern China, such as Hu Shi 胡適 (a major promoter of vernacular Chinese), Xu Zhimuo 徐志摩 (one of the important pioneers of *baihua shi*), Guo Muozua 郭沫若 (an influential poet and historian), Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (one of the most important poets of modern China), and numerous followers. See Zhang Hongnian 11-31.

<sup>10</sup> See Introduction of Chen Ciyun; Tang Degang; Peng Ching-hsi, "*Fanyi yu Geren CaiQing*"; Sung Mei-hua.

<sup>11</sup> Only in 2003, the publisher produced another print.

<sup>12</sup> The issue of norm can be tricky. Take Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" for example. Christopher Beach points out the reason why the poem is important:

The success of Pound's poem depends not only on its single image ... but also on its highly effective use of sound and rhythm. The poem's verbal energy can be attributed to its forceful refusal of iambic meter—especially in the second line ... The poem is a significant step in the development of modernist poetry. First of all, its compression was unprecedented; no English poem had been expected to carry so much meaning in so few words. Secondly, by simply juxtaposing two complex images without comment and leaving the reader to establish a relation between them, the poem allows for an extremely open-ended set of possible meanings" (Beach 26-7).

If there had not been a long-standing norm of iambic metre in English poetry tradition, there would not even be an issue of the "refusal" of using the metre, not to mention a forceful one. Along with its "unprecedented" features, the poem gained its importance and made its contribution simply by contradicting the norm of English poetry. Therefore, the norm contributes to the aesthetic achievement of this poem by being contradicted, rather than being an aesthetical basis, such as what



and norm are involved here are beyond the ambition of this thesis.<sup>13</sup>

The thesis seeks to point to a key issue: no matter where the relationship between a poem and its translation lands in this source text-target text relationship spectrum, a poem is to be translated into a poem, both of whose “total effect” emerge holistically. Therefore, the “total effect” potential of a poem is the pertinent object for translation. The significance of this is to translate a “total effect” with a compatible “total effect.” It is also the pertinent object for poetry translation criticism. To foreground the significance of this precept, the thesis will refer to the source text as the source poem (SP) and the target text as the target poem (TP) hereafter.

In *The Well Wrought Urn*, Cleanth Brooks tries to prove the autonomy of the text of poetry from its historical context by analyzing patterns in a selection of poems “to see what residuum, if any, is left after we have referred the poem to its cultural matrix” (*Well* x). In a Quixotic tone, he states,

We tend to say that every poem is an expression of its age; that we must be

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heroic couplet had been to Pope’s *Iliad*. It would be worthwhile to investigate whether Huang’s *rubaiyat* achieved its “success” as Pound’s two-lined poem did by contradicting, or, at least, ignoring the norm. However, it is beyond the ambition of this thesis.

Edward FitzGerald’s Omar Khayyam could be a case of the tricky side of the effect that the norm might have. “Most obviously the popularity of the poem seems to have rested on its blithe dismissal of all conventional Victorian ethical imperatives. [274] But because these views are offered in the guise of a translation, FitzGerald was not felt to be subversive” (Cronin 273-74) And this might be the reason, as George suspects, the reason “that made his translation so appealing to the Victorians” (Cronin 274). FitzGerald’s translation, adopting the iambic pentameter, may have conformed to the literary norm but not to the ethical norm.

<sup>13</sup> The point is, when the issue of norm is concerned, it is easier to see what happened in the farther past and conclude why it happened, but not so, the near past and the present. Therefore, the issue is beyond the ambition of this thesis.

careful to ask of it only what its own age asked; that we must judge it only by the canons of its age. Any attempt to view it *sub specie aeternitatis*, we feel, must result in illusion.

Perhaps it must. Yet, if poetry exists as poetry in any [x-xi] meaningful sense, the attempt must be made. Otherwise the poetry of the past becomes significant merely as cultural anthropology, and the poetry of the present, merely as a political, or religious, or moral instrument. ... We had better begin with it, by making the closest possible examination of what the poem says as a poem.

(*Well* x-xi)

Although aiming at seeing what a poem has to say as a poem, the thesis does not agree that any literary work can be interpreted absolutely ahistorically. A simple fact points this out: what any word means is related to its contemporary historical context. Therefore, a poet cannot but compose in a certain historical context just as a reader not read in one. Viewed from this point alone, the historical context is ubiquitous in any poem and poetry reading. But, there is no denying that there is something universal in what makes poetry poetry, or how can it be readily accepted that ancient Greek epics and *jueju* of the Tang dynasty are both poetry, and e. e. cummings and Du Fu both poets—cases that vary widely from each other both in time and culture? A possible problem, if there is one, in Brooks's viewpoint is that "what the poem says as a poem," i.e. what all poetries share, seems to be taken as something exclusive to the historical context of the poem.

Apparently, there is a paradox here. What makes poetry poetry should be



universal and, therefore, ahistorical, AND, at the same time, no poem can be composed and/or read ahistorically. This paradox becomes confusing only when it is approached from the wrong direction. The issue should not be whether or not a poem can be read purely by itself without its historical context, but whether the historical context is aesthetically effective and how the effect happens. The thesis aims to demonstrate that it is by being a part of a contextual relation with other elements of poetry that the historical context comes into the picture. Therefore, what is more relevant is what this contextual relation is and how it is aesthetically effective. For example, how Arthur Waley and Burton Watson arrived at their different translations of Han Shan can be explained by their backgrounds and the historical context where the translations took place. Despite this fact, neither how their translations can be aesthetically effective nor what “total effects” their translations may produce can be explained by this context alone. The historical context is only one of the elements that form contextual relations in reading their translations and many more need to be taken into account and viewed holistically when the aesthetic effectiveness of their translations is examined.

For the contextual relation, the thesis means to include more than the physical adjacency which the term might literally suggest. What is more important and what this thesis tries to explore are those elements of a poem that are treated as context by

a reader when aesthetic effect is discerned there. They may be grouped under a “contextual relation” because they attract the attention of the reader with aesthetic potentiality. They may be as slight as a punctuation mark or as substantial as the whole work. They may also be the aesthetic significance that emerges from other contextual relations in that reading. In addition, since all of the past reading experience somehow forms a basis for the present one, the thesis expands the contextualizing compass further to include the contexts exterior to the text that can bring forth distinct significance, including cultural context, for example.

The contextual relations vary in how they may be effective. The thesis aims at investigating how contextual relations may form and function in different ways and its significance in the criticism of poetry translation. For example, Chinese is much more resourceful in rhyming and forming parallelism than English while the metric patterns of English poetry are non-existent in Chinese. Can an English translation of a *lüshi*<sup>14</sup> (regulated poem), a parallelism-packed Chinese poetic genre, without using any rhyme scheme and parallelism be aesthetically compatible to its SP? For the criticism to be relevant here, the thesis argues, it needs to be based on examining and comparing the aesthetic effects of the contextual relations potential in both. One of the first jobs in this mission is to know what contextual relations there are and how

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<sup>14</sup> I. e. 律詩, a poetic genre composed of eight lines of five or seven characters. The middle four lines must form two perfectly paralleled couplets.

they function.

Although it has been advanced in the past that a poem should be translated into a poem,<sup>15</sup> there has not been sufficient attention paid to whether the translation of a poem is reviewed specifically as poetry translation and not as prose translation. The importance of this is that, when it is not taken as basis, the criticism will fail to explain why a TP can be as aesthetically effective and compatible to a SP. It does not seem to make any difference whether a poem is translated into a poem or not as long as the target text is a prose translation that transfers duly the linguistic and cultural contents of the source text—except its beauty as a poem.

There is eminent need of a framework through which a poem is read as a poem, i.e. seeing how all of the elements of a poem come together and produce a “total effect” and explaining the mechanism of the contextual relations one may see in a poem. A critical framework specifically for poetry translation needs to be developed for investigating whether the “total effect” emerging from the TP is aesthetically compatible to that of the SP, or, in Holmes’s wording, how a target text mirrors darkly the source text. Before this framework can be possible, it is necessary to find out what is universal in poetry as the conceptual body and a theoretical vertebrate for this body to which the contextual relations can link with one another.

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<sup>15</sup> For example, see Shelley, *Critical Prose* 8-9; Giles, *Gem* 289; Turner, *Golden Treasure* 10.



Chinese poetics, with holism as its keynote, provides two answers to what this body can be. Firstly, poetry is a holistic quality between and beyond the lines of a text. Secondly, what makes poetry poetry is in the infinite and unexpected alternation of *ji* (aberration) and *zheng* (norm) that resonates holistically, instead of the concrete elements themselves, such as rhyme, metric pattern, imagery and so on. This holism is echoed by Western critics such as Alexander Pope, who also argued that poetry, like the beauty in a face, exists holistically in the work.

Gestalt Theory fits in here as THE choice for the conceptual vertebrate. Edgar Degas, the painter, once complained to Stéphane Mallarmé, the poet, “Votre métier est infernal. Je n’arrive pas à faire ce que je veux et pourtant, je suis plein d’idées...” The poet responded, “Ce n’est point avec des idées, mon cher Degas, que l’on fait des vers. C’est avec des *mots*” (Valéry, *Variété V* 141). What a poet or poetry translator can produce in the end is a text on paper. On the other hand, it can be argued that no matter what and how much a reader may read into a poem or a translation, what is read in the first place is also the text—the rest of the process is happening in the reader’s mind and, somehow, the poetry in a poem is seen, like a gestalt. Gestalt Theory studies and explains how the innate human faculty of seeing gestalt processes holistically the fragmentary messages from the world. It echoes how a reader/translator sees the “total effect” from the text of a poem and its

translation, which is, at the first reading, made up of fragmental linguistic parts.

Therefore, the thesis adopts this theory as part of the vertebrate of the framework and a new term, “poestalt” for this “total effect” is coined from “poem” and “gestalt.”

With the contextual relation-poestalt framework set up, the role and use of Gestalt Theory begins to show in dealing with several important issues related to poetry translation and its criticism. The thesis will attack the following. Firstly, when poestalts may or may not emerge from contextual relations and its significance to poetry translation and its criticism. Secondly, how reader/translators are inevitably involved creatively in poetry translation and its significance to poetry translation and its criticism. Thirdly, an investigation of the nature of contextual relation, its dynamism and their significance to poetry translation and its criticism.

There are limits to the ambition of this thesis. Firstly, it only covers poetry translation between English and Chinese. Secondly, despite arguing that there is a universal basis of poetry, the thesis resorts more to the Chinese poetry tradition for theoretical resource than to the Western, since holism has long been the key note of the former and investigated more thoroughly in that tradition. Thirdly, the thesis may demonstrate what one TP has achieved by offsetting it with other TP's that have not done the same, especially when more than two TP's are included in a case study. The

purpose is to highlight the one that the thesis thinks most typical. However, there is a danger here of seeming to cross the thin line between criticism and evaluation. If this seems to be the case, it is not the intention of the thesis. Any TP can be aesthetically effective or compatible to the SP in its own way and it is beyond the ambition of this thesis to establish an evaluating system for poetry translation or to cover all of the aesthetic possibilities of any TP (which the thesis argues could be endless). Fourthly, as the thesis argues that the basis of the framework is arguably universal, an example of one translation direction will be adopted for each case study without another of the other direction to double check.<sup>16</sup> Poems will be poems after all, no matter which language they are in.

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<sup>16</sup> For example, in an argument where an example of English as the source language is provided, there will not be another with Chinese as the source language and vice versa.



## **Part One: A Framework**

## I. A Poem for a Poem

### The Significance of Translating Poetry into Poetry

From his experience as a poetry translator, Burton Raffel insists, "I do know that in order to translate poetry one has to be a poet" (*Translating Poetry* 102) and "Poetry in translation is either poetry born anew or it is nothing at all" (*Forked* 115). As Clive Scott observes, "But if we think our way into an affirmative version of choice, choice as real preference, choice as performance, choice as a way of defining or generating oneself, choice as the pursuit of certain linguistic value or perceptual positions, then translation itself begins to look very different as a kind of writing" (251). In fact, "poets not ordinarily thought of as translators can often be detected in the act of translating, imitating, and parodying other writers: Shakespeare and T. S. Eliot are obvious examples. Many successful translators in the past have been, and many now living are, poets: Chapman, Pope, Robert Lowell, Richmond Lattimore, Robert Fitzgerald are among the names that come to mind" (Brower, *Forms of Lyrics* 1).

Criticizing Thomas Carlyle who brought up a similar notion much earlier, Paul Selver states, "It sounds plausible, but, in reality, is rather misleading. The truth

is, that anyone who has translated a poem worthily becomes a poet by virtue of having done so, even though he has never written a poem of his own" (47). On this issue, James Holmes, who also holds a similar notion, states, "Like the poet, he will strive to exploit his own creative powers, the literary traditions of the target culture, and the expressive means of the target language in order to produce a verbal object that to all appearances is nothing more or less than a poem" (*Translated* 11). While Selver focuses on how the poet and the poetry translator may share a similar pattern in the ignition of their activities, Holmes points out that there may be more similarities between a poet and a poetry translator in the process of their activities. Holmes, furthermore, illuminates here that what matters is whether the translation can be categorized as a poem.

In other words, since whether a poetry translator is a poet at the same time or not is unprovable, it is more practical and pertinent to focus on whether the translation is poetry or not. As Raffel puts it, "One does not need to read classical Greek to know that Sappho could never have enjoyed the reputation she has had for almost three millennia had she written such flat, tepid verse" (*Translating Poetry* 169). The fundamental and most crucial requirement is that a poem be translated into an aesthetically compatible poem. What this also entails is that, to be an aesthetic counterpart of the SP, it is necessary that the TP possess its own aesthetic coherence



before it can be aesthetically compatible to the SP. To see if this is the case, a comparative criticism that focuses on aesthetic coherence in the TP and compatibility between the SP and the TP is necessary. Two issues emerge: what is the nature of the beauty of poetry and how can the aesthetic compatibility between the SP and the TP and the aesthetic coherence inside a poem/translation be examined?

To achieve aesthetic compatibility in a translation where a translator manages to arrive at a version that can stand on its own as poetry, revision is more than often inevitable. This process involves comparisons between different possibilities, choices and decision-making. From this light, the translator is the first critic of his/her own translation. Pointing out one of the targets that a critical comparison should aim at, Raffel states, "... the translator must work to the limits of his own taste. He must also [23] be a critic—and enough of a critic to recognize, sooner or later, his own poor choices" (Forked 22-3). Holmes, on the other hand, focuses on other targets this critic needs to attack, stating, "like the critic, the metapoet will strive to comprehend as thoroughly as possible the many features of the original poem, against the setting of the poet's other writings, the literary traditions of the source culture, and the expressive means of the source language" (*Translated* 11). Furthermore, when two or more TP's are critically compared, what this translational criticism should be is also an important issue. When the aesthetic compatibility between the SP and its TP's is

not taken as the main locus of translational criticism, the criticism may miss an important point—how the TP can be an aesthetically compatible poem to the SP instead of a piece of prose that somehow echoes the SP. This will be demonstrated with both microscopic and macroscopic approaches in the following sections.

## From a Microscopic Approach Into Poetry or Prose?

A way of microscopic criticism is to compare linguistic details between the SP and the TP. *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* by Eliot Weinberger offers an example, where the critic chooses and criticizes sixteen translations of “*Lu Zhai*,”<sup>17</sup> a *wuyan jueju* (five-character quatrain),<sup>18</sup> by Wang Wei (701-761).<sup>19</sup> The following are Snyder’s translation and Weinberger’s comments:

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<sup>17</sup> I.e. 鹿柴. The text: 空山不見人但聞人語響返景入深林復照青苔上 (Fu, Wang 71). Despite the number in the title, there are only sixteen translations, as the first is the original text, the second transliteration and the third a character-by-character translation. Weinberger also offers some critical comparisons between these translations in the criticism. Since the book was published, more translator visited Wang’s “empty mountain.” One of the latest translation published in 2007 is offered in Appendix 1.

Here is the transliteration of the poem with its gloss:

<i>kong</i>	<i>shan</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>ren</i>
empty	mountain	no	to see	people
<i>dan</i>	<i>wen</i>	<i>ren</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>xiang</i>
yet	to hear	people	talk	to sound
<i>fan</i>	<i>ying</i>	<i>ru</i>	<i>shen</i>	<i>lin</i>
to return	light	to enter	deep	forest
<i>fu</i>	<i>zhao</i>	<i>qing</i>	<i>tai</i>	<i>shag</i>
again	to shine	green	moss	upon

<sup>18</sup> I.e. 五言(five-character) 絕句(quatrain).

<sup>19</sup> I.e. 王維.



Empty mountains:  
     no one to be seen.  
 Yet—hear—  
     human sounds and echoes.  
 Returning sunlight  
     enters the dark woods;  
 Again shining  
     on the green moss, above.

(Weinberger 42)

[1] Surely one of the best translations, partially because of Snyder's lifelong forest experience. Like Rexroth, he can *see* the scene. Every word of Wang has been translated, and nothing added, yet the translation exists as an American poem.

[2] Changing the passive *is heard* to the imperative *hear* is particularly beautiful, and not incorrect: it creates an exact moment, which is now. Giving us both meanings, *sounds and echoes*, for the last word of line 2 is, like most sensible ideas, revolutionary. Translators always assume that only one reading of a foreign word or phrase may be presented, despite the fact that perfect correspondence is rare.

[3] The poem ends strangely. Snyder takes the last word, which everyone else has read as *on*, and translates it with its alternative meaning, *above*, isolating it from the phrase with a comma. What's going on? Moss presumably is only above if one is a rock or bug. Or are we meant to look up, after seeing the moss, back toward the sun: the vertical metaphor of enlightenment?

[4] In answer to my query, Snyder wrote: 'The reason for "...moss, above" ... is that the sun is entering (in its sunset sloping, hence "again"—a final shaft) the woods, and illuminating some moss *up in the tree*. (NOT ON ROCKS.) This is how my teacher Ch'en Shih-hsinag saw it, and my wife (Japanese) too, the first time she looked at the poem.'

[5] The point is that translation is more than a leap from dictionary to dictionary; it is a reimagining of the poem. As such, every reading of every poem, regardless of language, is an act of translation: translation into the reader's intellectual and emotional life. As no individual reader remains the same, each reading becomes a different—not merely another—reading. The same poem cannot be read twice.

[6] Snyder's explanation is only one moment, the latest, when the poem suddenly transforms before our eyes. Wang's 20 characters remain the



same, but the poem continues in a state of restless change. (43)

Weinberger chooses several highly significant syntactic and/or grammatical shifts to highlight how Snyder translates as a poet, not just as a translator. The effect and significance of isolating “above,” which is unique among his samples, is interpreted even more elaborately. However, when the criticism is read with the following passage as the target text, i.e. Snyder’s translation in prose layout,

Empty mountains: no one to be seen. Yet—hear—human sounds and echoes.  
Returning sunlight enters the dark woods; again shining on the green moss, above.

it seems that Weinberger’s comments can be applied to this version of Snyder’s translation as well. Since they contain exactly the same text, the personal experience of Snyder, if it does infiltrate into the translation, remains intact here, and both versions are equally literally faithful to the SP and equally “beautiful” and “revolutionary” in their wording (as stated in paragraph 2). In addition, with paragraphs 3 and 4, i.e. a third of the article, Weinberger seeks to explain the significance of the curious position of “above,” which is positioned at the end of the translation and given a pause before it with a comma. However, he only discusses what its significance may be if it is an epithet of “moss.” Again, this observation can be applied to the prose version since nothing is touched upon about what the “above”

in Snyder's layout can achieve while the "above" in prose version cannot. In other words, in Weinberger's comment, nothing relevant about Snyder's translation as an aesthetically compatible poem to the SP is touched upon. His comment can be about a prose translation. This foregrounds the necessity and importance of a comparative criticism specifically for poetry translation.

To appreciate Snyder's translation as poetry, not just a prose translation of Wang Wei, the following points need to be highlighted. Firstly, the aesthetic effect of engrafting Snyder's personal experience in his translation is more than its mere presence. What is relevant is how this effect happens in the layout of Snyder's translation as a poem. Secondly, to fully reveal the aesthetic effect of "hear" and "sounds and echoes," it is necessary to investigate the aesthetic significance of how the former rhymes with "yet," alliterates with "human" and forms the shortest line in the translation and how the latter forms an onomatopoeic trochee pace of echoing sound waves and parallels paradoxically with "empty mountains," which is also in trochee. Both embody the paradox keynote of the poem itself. The rarity of perfect correspondence between any two languages, a universal linguistic phenomenon, is hardly a reason for providing more than one option for readers to choose from, such as the case here. Thirdly, the aesthetic effect that "above" may originate in the poetry version, which is absent in prose version, comes from its parallelism with "woods"



(one more hint of the location of the moss), its being one of the two iamb (the other is “again”) in a text dominated by trochees and spondees.<sup>20</sup> These bring an aesthetic effect of which the prose version is deficient.

## Out of Poetry or Prose?

Weinberger insightfully starts the book with this statement, “Great poetry lives in a state of perpetual transformation, perpetual translation: a poem dies when it has no place to go” (Weinberger 1). The aesthetic potential hoarded in the original poem that makes these transformations possible should be an important issue. Furthermore, as the title of the book may imply, there should be something there rich in aesthetic possibility as poetry, out of which translators create their own vision of the SP. However, the SP does not seem to be read as poetry either. This suspicion rises when the following prose version of the SP (followed with the gloss of each character),

*Kong/shan/wei/jian/xing/ren/dan/wen/ren/zu/zhong/xiang/ri/ying/chong/hui/sh  
en/lin/zhong/zhao/zu/qing/tai/zhi/shang*

(Empty/mountain/not/see/walking/people/but/hear/human/voice/make/sound/

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<sup>20</sup> The trochees include “empty,” “mountain,” “human,” “sounds and,” “echoes,” “shining.” The spondees include “yet—hear,” “sunlight,” “dark woods,” and “green moss.” The last two, if isolated, can be iambs. However, situated where they are and formally echoing “sunlight,” the preceding articles, which is unstressed, offset and therefore heighten the stress of “dark” and “green” for the two metres to sound more like spondees than iambs.

sun/light/close/evening/again/return/deep/woods/middle/shine/at/green/moss/  
zhi<sup>21</sup>/up),<sup>22</sup>

is compared with Snyder’s translation and examines the issues brought up in Weinberger’s criticism. It shows that few points in the criticism of Snyder’s translation need alteration because little of the aesthetic achievement of “*Lu Zhai*” as poetry is used as the basis for his argument. In fact, little on this aspect is mentioned in the book. After an introduction to the historical and literary background of the poem and the poet in chapter one and a linguistic explanation of the text in chapters two and three, Weinberger fails to touch upon how the SP can be so aesthetically valuable and versatile that it is worth the labor of collecting these ways to look at it. As a result, a prose version of the SP, as one provided above, can also justify the criticism of Weinberger as the source text of Snyder’s translation. That is to say, the SP has not been read as a poem.

Paz’s comment on the difficulty of translating this poem shares this blind spot too: “Translation of this poem is particularly difficult, for the poem carries to an

<sup>21</sup> An empty word preceding a locational expression  
<sup>22</sup> The Chinese of the gloss of the prose version is, 空山未見行人但聞人語作響日影向晚重回深林中照於青苔之上. For comparison, the gloss of the poem as offered by Weinberger is as follows:

Empty	mountain(s)/hill(s)	(negative)	to see	person/people
But	to hear	person/people	words/conversation	sound/to echo
To return	bright(ness)/shadow(s)	to enter	deep	forest
To enter/Again	to shine/to reflect	green/blue/black	moss/lichen	Above/on (top f)/to

(Weinberger 6)

As the original text is almost a short piece of prose with tonal pattern, what is done here is making it prose by adding some linking words and empty words to break down the tonal pattern.



sun/light/close/evening/again/return/deep/woods/middle/shine/at/green/moss/  
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extreme the characteristics of Chinese poetry: universality, impersonality, absence of time, absence of subject” (Weinberger 31). These qualities are in fact not exclusive to poetry but generic in the Chinese language, especially traditional Chinese, clearly demonstrated by the prose version offered here. This explains why this prose version of the SP can also work as the source text for Weinberger’s criticism. In a word, the criticism of Weinberger has explained how the text of Wang Wei’s poem is translated into the text of Snyder’s rendition, but nothing is certain there about whether Snyder has translated the poetry in Wang Wei’s poem or not.

This discussion is not to question the validity of the topics and issues Weinberger has brought up about those translations. It is the validity of the approach toward them that this thesis questions. In the chapter on Snyder’s translation, Weinberger duly points out in the first paragraph that his translation can stand as a poem. However, the rest of the essay is spent mostly on how the translator has done his job within the limit of literal faithfulness. This means that it does not matter then whether Snyder’s translation is a poem as it is or the prose version given earlier. As shown above, there are limits and blind spots in reviewing poetry translation with such a generic approach. For one thing, Snyder certainly adds new elements into his translation. What Snyder adds, the layout, to name an apparent one, is specifically poetry. How it can be aesthetically effective is of key importance to the success of

Snyder's translation and a key issue in poetry translation.

## From a Macroscopic Approach

### All about the Mist

A case of the macroscopic end is to base the criticism on the comparisons of the overall qualities of the SP and the TP, instead of narrowing down to discuss how linguistic details are rendered. The translational criticism of Matthew Arnold on several past translators of Homer, especially Francis Newman, provides an example of this approach. Quoting Coleridge, "Whene'er the mist, which stands 'twixt God and thee/ Defecates to a pure transparency" (*On Translating Homer* 11) as a metaphor of his idea of translation, Arnold describes what the ideal relationship between translator and the original text might be:

[i]t may be said of that union of the translator with his original, which alone can produce a good translation, that it takes place when the mist which stands between them—the mist of alien modes of thinking, speaking, and feeling on the translator's part—"defecates to a pure transparency", and disappears (*On Translating Homer* 11).

Here we see two steps towards a good translation: firstly, to clear away the mist in the translator to a degree of pure transparency and secondly, to unite with the



original.<sup>23</sup> To demonstrate his idea of this mist, Arnold describes examples of a different nature: the mist between Cowper and Homer was an “elaborate Miltonic manner,” that between Pope and Homer, a “literary artificial manner,” that between Chapman and Homer, a ‘fancifulness of Homer’s thought and feeling’, and the mist between Newman and Homer proved the most serious and unexplainable one— a ‘cloud’ of more than ‘Egyptian thickness’. Arnold describes the difference between Homer and these translations as failures to render certain qualities in Homer: Cowper failed on pace, Pope on plainness and directness of style and diction, Chapman on plainness and directness of idea, and Newman, clearly having seen the faults of his predecessors, ironically not only in nobility but also more conspicuously.<sup>24</sup>

Arnold points out that “the translator of Homer should above all be penetrated by a sense of four qualities of Homer: that he is eminently rapid; that he is eminently plain and direct, both in the evolution of his thought and in the expression of it, that is, both in his syntax and in his words; that he is eminently plain and direct in the substance of his thought, that is, in his matter and ideas; and, finally that he is eminently noble;--[sic] I probably seem to be saying what is too general to be of much service to anybody” (*On Translating Homer* 10). Obviously, there is a hazy

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<sup>23</sup> This concept of transparency may be contrasted with Walter Benjamin’s idea of what a good translation should be— “the real translation is transparent, it does not cover the original, does not block its light” (Schulte, 79-80). Benjamin’s transparency is different from what Arnold wished for since what Benjamin meant is “a literal rendering of syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator.” To Benjamin, words are the passage through the blocking wall of the sentence. (Schulte, 78-80)

<sup>24</sup> See Arnold *On Translating Homer* 11-12.

ambiguity in these “eminent” qualities he proposed. As there will always be discrepancy, from subtly sophisticated nuances to unsurpassably divergent extremes, in any two interpretations of these abstract qualities, there is no way to avoid further differentiation in their embodiment. For those who can compare the original with its translation, they seldom fail to spot unacceptable or, at least, uncomfortable compromises that insulate Homer and the translations (a kind of mist in between)—unless they share the precepts and criteria of translation specifically for the text in question that the translator holds. All of these new embodiments, i.e. new media, carry their own connotation and significance. Consequently, any abstract quality simply cannot keep the metaphysical purity when embodied.<sup>25</sup>

Arnold, in fact, touches upon a phenomenon in poetry translation: one may not be able to translate poetry without a certain individual “mist,” as the practice of those past translators shows.<sup>26</sup> In addition, what Arnold perceives as mist that

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<sup>25</sup> While Arnold imposes Victorian nobility on Homer, Homer in fact can be coarse sometimes. See Mason, *To Homer* 11-13.

<sup>26</sup> Although Arnold establishes an insightful translation critic system based and functioning on a set of groundwork qualities, it is not without ironies and problems when in the few occasion he puts his theory into practice. The irony is that Arnold also fails to “translate” up to his own theory. As Constructive and insightful a translation criticism as what Arnold advances on translating Homer may be, it still needs concrete example to substantiate the abstracts it proffers. One of them is that Arnold either restrains from producing his own translation to embody his opinion, even on the possibly one of the shortest expressions as “a poor wretched beast” or, on the very few place he offers his translation for demonstration, should do what former and his contemporary translators have been doing, which he himself criticizes relentlessly.

Towards the end of section three of *On Translating Homer*, Arnold finally demonstrates his criteria with a translation of Homer in considerable length, a passage of six lines, as displayed below:

So shone forth, in front of Troy, by the bed of Xanthus,  
Between that and the ships, the Trojans' numerous fires.  
In the plain there were kindled a thousand fires: by each one



insulates the translator from Homer can be viewed in another way: since the original work possesses a unique aesthetic coherence that is embedded in the source language and culture and its translation needs its own aesthetic coherence to echo it, the mist is in fact an inevitable substitute for the aesthetic coherence of Homer.

## Different Mists for Homer

The following are several approaches to concocting this substitute. Pope proposes several strategies for transferring rhetorical details. Besides affirming the

There sat fifty men, in the ruddy light of the fire:  
 By their chariots stood the steeds, and champed the white barley  
 While their masters sat by the fire, and waited for Morning. [emphases mine]  
 (99)

Two points are interested in his justification of his own translating strategy. As one can easily see some stylistic problems here and, obviously, Arnold knows perfectly well that they will certainly be brought up as criticism against him. The three fire's (either singular or plural) appear in three consecutive lines at or near the end of line, a foregrounding position, and a fourth follows only two lines later, which certainly proves a stylistic problem. Though Arnold explains "I repeat the word 'fires' as he [Homer] repeats 'ἔνθα' without scruple;...", one cannot help wondering whether when this kind of repetition becomes more unscrupulous than English can tolerate, any substitution to keep a proper English style on one hand inevitably will reduce the quality of plainness and simplicity on the other.

In addition, Arnold "prefers to attribute this expectation of Morning to the master and not to the horse," because of his "care to avoid anything which may the least check or surprise the reader." Left alone the doubt that a people like Englishmen that produces works like *Alice in the Wonderland* will be surprised or checked by horses that waits for the morning, this care to avoid unfamiliarity, conscious or unconscious, is the very reason why Chapman ends up with an Elizabethan Homer and Pope with an Augustan one. What can be more naturally for an Elizabethan poet to be more fanciful and an Augustan one to write in heroic couplet? It will be no surprise that Arnold's Homer, should he produce one, will be rapid, plain, noble but Victorian.

The problem is that judgmentalness proves a factor that mars the originality of his criticism and sets a "bad" example of translation criticism. One of the typical examples of his wording goes "To bad practice he has prefixed the bad theory which made the practice bad; he has given us a false theory in his preface, and he has exemplified the bad effects of that false theory in his translation" (*On Translating Homer* 66). No wonder Newman returns a response with acid, sarcastic remarks like "the worst of all is a fastidious and refined man to whom everything quaint seems ignoble and contemptible" (Newman in Arnold, *On Translating Homer* 160) to which Arnold feels attacked personally and responds with *Last Words* who seems to forget who starts getting personal in the first place. There is a slippery slope called "judgmentalness" where an academic argument slips into slashing each other academically. If the world does not need a bad translation of Homer to bring possible harm on general taste as Arnold maintains, the world certainly does not need judgmentalness in translation criticism either.



importance of retaining the “spirit and fire” of Homer, he suggests to “consider him [Homer] in comparison with Virgil above all the ancients and with Milton above all the moderns” (Pope xxiii). This equally specific choice of model reveals the existence of a general cohering key with which Pope tunes his translation to echo the original. If this device is not appreciated, it will probably look like an insulator that keeps one at a distance from the original. Aiming at rendering his Homer “entire and unmaimed” (xix), Pope claims that he basically managed to keep the translation proportional to the corresponding parts of the original. There is no loose paraphrase where “twenty verses sprang out of two” as in Chapman’s nor contraction by omitting sentences and similes as in Hobbes’ (Pope xxii). It was to adopt the heroic couplet to establish a prosody distant but parallel to Homeric epic verse that comprised the core of his translating strategy. He recreates Homeric rhetoric by keeping a corresponding relationship to the original form when possible and making adjustment accordingly to the degree of discrepancy and conflict between the two languages. For example, dealing with often-used compound epithets and repetition in Homer, Pope practiced integrating different strategies to strike a balance between preserving what was in the original and trying to be as Greek as English could tolerate.

Anne Dacier, the famous early eighteenth century French translator of Homer,

can be regarded as a target-reader oriented translator of canonized works like Homeric epics who aimed at introducing great works to the educated but unlearned public. Dacier, adopting prose form for her translation, claims that “Virgil was wont to say it is easier to have wrested Hercules’ club from him than to steal a verse from Homer by way of imitation (Robinson, *Western* 187-88), accepting that French could not translate Homeric epics into compatible poetry. She chose a form that differed even in genre. The best, she believed, left of Homer after two millennia in modern French was something like the mummy of Helen, only from the lifeless frame of which could one imagine how marvelous her beauty would have been if she were alive (Robinson, *Western* 187-88). To sum up her point, prose, under the precept of reader-orientation and the assumption of an unsurpassable linguistic abyss, will do as well since poetry cannot do better.

Newman, however, examines the problem from different aspects than Dacier, Arnold and Pope. While they focused their attention on the relationship between the translation and original work, Newman thought further about the compatibility of the interaction between the original work and its receivers and between his translation and its modern readers. While Arnold focused on the qualities Homer possessed, Newman took a step further to explore what these qualities might look like to modern receivers as the original would to the ancient Greeks. This led to Newman’s



choice of using archaic style since those stories of Trojan Wars belonged to a distant past even to Homer himself; they had been circulating for centuries when Homer learned of them. Newman antiquated his text so as to be faithful to what Homeric epics might have looked like to an ancient audience. From this light, the "mist," or haze in Newman's case, is not something that stands between these translators and Homer when approached from a translator's point of view. Actually, it is the medium that translators use to transfer Homer and apply as a poetic breath of resuscitation what they think is compatible to Homer poetic physiology.<sup>27</sup>

When one reviews the issue from a translator's position, it is clear that the mist which a translator 'places between himself and the original work', as Arnold phrased it, is the very basis on which he/she can achieve any aesthetical coherence at all in the translation. There can be no translation without a new body for the original to reside in and there will be bound to be an aesthetic mediating mechanism for any aesthetic coherence in the translation to subsist at all.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, as a translational

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<sup>27</sup> But, of course, there is no guarantee that all media will work. The translators, of course, adopt the one that they think is best compatible to the poetic physiology the SP. Whether it will "resuscitate" the SP and keep it alive for how many generations of readers is totally another story. There is the question of the individual taste, intention, cultural background and faculty and, more importantly, the unpredictability of what the future norm might be.

<sup>28</sup> August Wilhelm von Schlegel, the early nineteenth century German translator-poet scholar, was confident that German, a language more malleable than English and French, could stand to be foreignized without being frowned upon and that this made German able to "approach the original text with such happy fidelity" (Robinson, *Western* 216-17). But this affinity to unfamiliar style or tolerance to deviation from norm is a cultural temperament, rather than a linguistic fact. The German literary system of the nineteenth century with Goethe still paramount possessed more susceptibility to new elements, which might be frowned upon as odd and "hazy" in a literary system like English, which possessed norms well established and therefore more rigid since Elizabethan times (Even-Zohar 45-51; Robinson, *Western* 216-17). In fact, Arnold's persistence on the quality of nobleness provided an footnote for Schlegel's criticism on the enthusiasm in other European Homer



critic, the first mission in priority is not to label the body with a quality but to examine whether there is aesthetic coherence.

## Lost in the Mist

Ironically, the top down approach such as the “mist” analysis presented above may fail to encompass what is unique in the translation as poetry on its own right and be trapped in a pitfall that awaits the microscopic approach. The following comparison between two translations of a passage from Book XXII of *The Odyssey* is an example of this pitfall. The first is the prose translations by Walter Shewring and the second by Lattimore, which is arranged as prose to manifest the issue in question (the sentences are enumerated with numbers in square brackets for reference in analysis):<sup>29</sup>

[1] So [Odysseus] spoke, and aimed the keen arrow at Antinous. [2] The youth had almost raised to his lips a fine two-handled golden goblet, indeed he had it between his hands, ready to taste the wine. [3] No fear of slaughter was in his heart. [4] Who, with his friends feasting round him, would think that one man among so many, let his prowess be what it might, would bring grim death and black doom upon him? [5] But Odysseus took aim and wounded him in the throat, and the arrow-point pierced his delicate neck right

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translation traditions: “The fact that they have among them so many supposed lovers of classical antiquity should not fool us; how many of them must first mentally dress a Greek or Roman up in some modish attire before they can find him attractive?” (Robinson, *Western* 217) Arnold too dressed his Homer with a “mist.”

<sup>29</sup> The two are chosen because they are similar in wording and therefore relevant in demonstrating the important difference. However, there is a time gap between the two translations. Shewring’s was published in 1980 while Lattimore’s in 1965.

through. [6] He swerved to one side, and the cup dropped as the shaft went home. [7] A thick jet of blood gushed from his nostrils; he suddenly kicked the stable from him and spilled all the food upon the floor; the bread and the roasted meat were befouled with blood. [8] The suitor filled the house with clamour when they saw Antinous fallen so; [8.5] they leapt from their seats in huge dismay and their eyes searched up and down the walls, but nowhere was there a shield or spear to lay hands upon.

(Shewring 265)

[1] [Odysseus] spoke, and steered a bitter arrow against Antinoös. [2] He was on the point of lifting up a fine two-handled goblet of gold, and had it in his hands, and was moving it so as to drink of the wine, and in his heart there was no thought of death. [3] For who would think that one man, alone in a company of many men at their feasting, though he were a very strong one, would ever inflict death upon him and dark doom? [4] But Odysseus, aiming at this man, struck him in the throat with an arrow, and clean through the soft part of the neck the point was driven. [5] He slumped away to one side, and out of his stricken hand fell the goblet, and up and through his nostrils there burst a thick jet of mortal blood, and with a thrust of his foot he kicked back the table from him, so that all the good food was scattered on the ground, bread and baked meats together; but [5.5] all the suitors clamored about the house when they saw that the man was fallen, sprang up from their seats and ranged about the room, throwing their glances every way all along the well-built walls, but there was never a shield there nor any strong spear form them.

(Lattimore, *Odyssey* 321-22)

Comparing the style of these pieces of prose, one may describe Shewring as news-like and prosaic and Lattimore as dramatic and dynamic. One way in which Lattimore creates such dramatic antagonism is with a more coherent choice of subjects for each sentence to create a clear antithesis between Odysseus and the suitors, including Antinoös. The same events happening in this passage are arranged



into five sentences by Lattimore and into eight by Shewring. From the five sentences of the former, readers see that the focus moves only between Odysseus (the first and fourth sentences) and Antinoös (the second and the fifth sentences). On the other hand, Shewring fails to stay consistent in his choice of the subjects for his sentences to create an antagonism as dramatic as Lattimore does. His focus shifts around from Odysseus in the first sentence, Antinoös in the second, his fear in the third, a generalization in the fourth, back to Odysseus in the fifth, then again to Antinoös in the sixth, then to Antinoös's blood in the seventh and to the suitors in the eighth.

Closely related to this issue is how the two translators arrange the details of the action into different syntaxes, rhetoric and grammatical structures. Lattimore adopts a variety of combinations to nuance different details dramatically with clear focus at the same time while the performance of Shewring is often monotonous in corresponding parts, resulting in a series of bleak impressions deficient of nuances. For example, Lattimore, in his fourth sentence, uses a participial phrase, "aiming at this man," to offset the major action in the sentence, "struck him in the throat" and a reverse syntax is adopted in the latter half, "clean through ... was driven" to give the wound a immediate close-up. In his fifth, after a clause to provide an overall view of the falling victim, he offers parallel frames of what is happening, all lead by prepositional phrases, to create synchronicity of the details in the scene. In contrast,



the latter half of the sentence, which describes how the suitors react, provides a sequence of actions, with two verbs, “clamored” and “sprang up,” to present the main action here and a subordinate phrase and a participial phrase to embellish it. On the other hand, Shewring often merely lists the events by adopting the same straightforward syntax to start his clauses: “So he spoke, and aimed ...” in the first sentence, “The youth had ...” in the second, “No fear of slaughter was ...” in the third, “But Odysseus took aim and wounded ...” in the fifth, “He swerved ...and the cup dropped ...” in the sixth, “A thick jet of blood gushed ... ; he suddenly kicked ... and spilled ...; the bread and the roasted meat were ...” in the seventh, and “The suitors filled ...; they leapt ... and their eyes searched ...” in the eighth.

In addition, Lattimore more often uses active and specific expressions to describe actions where Shewring adopts factual and general ones. In his second sentence, Lattimore describes the action of Antinoös who was about to drink is described with the past progressive tense which is more active than the past perfect tense Shewring uses. In Lattimore, Odysseus “struck” his victim while in Shewring he “wounded” him. In Lattimore, the suitors “clamored about the house” while in Shewring they “filled the house with clamour.”

There is a subtle but critical difference in narration in the fourth sentence of Shewring and the third of Lattimore, where both describe the last moment before the

massacre. Up to this point, Odysseus, showing up as an old ragged beggar, remains a mysterious stranger to them before he becomes the only one who passes Penelope's test for the suitors.<sup>30</sup> All the guests are completely ignorant of his true identity and intention up to this point of the story and therefore of the imminent massacre.

Accordingly, it is more logical for this interrogative pronoun, "who," to be non-specific and even involve all the guests (as Lattimore's "who" does) rather than referring more specifically to one character in the story (as Shewring's refers to Antinoös). In addition, unlike Shewring who adopts two sentences to narrate the situation, Lattimore groups the fall of Antinoös's body and the reaction of other suitors on its sight into one compound sentence to foreground their shared doom.

In a word, the comparison above is one between two prose translations. Even with the mist, i.e. the quality that permeates the translation, closely examined, the examination has not yet touched what truly makes Lattimore's version poetry.

## Through the Mist, Darkly

The following is Lattimore's translation in the original layout as poetry:

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<sup>30</sup> In both translations, even after Antinous's murder, the suitors are still not quite convinced or sure that the person was Odysseus and therefore reasonably ignorant of what was going to happen and the fact that the murder was meant for each and everyone of them would not occur to them when one of them was killed by this stranger, i.e. Odysseus. See pp. 321-22 of Lattimore and pp. 265-66 of Shewring.

.....

[Odysseus] spoke, and steered a bitter arrow against Antinoös.  
 He was on the point of lifting up a fine two-handled  
 goblet of gold, and had it in his hands, and was moving it  
 so as to drink of the wine, and in his heart there was no thought  
 of death. For who would think that one man, alone in a company 5  
 of many men at their feasting, though he were a very strong one,  
 would ever inflict death upon him and dark doom? But Odysseus,  
 aiming at this man, struck him in the throat with an arrow,  
 and clean through the soft part of the neck the point was driven.  
 He slumped away to one side, and out of his stricken hand fell 10  
 the goblet, and up and through his nostrils there burst a thick jet  
 of mortal blood, and with a thrust of his foot he kicked back  
 the table from him, so that all the good food was scattered  
 on the ground, bread and baked meats together; but all the suitors  
 clamored about the house when they saw that the man was fallen, 15  
 sprang up from their seats and ranged about the room, throwing  
 their glances every way all along the well-built walls,  
 but there was never a shield there nor any strong spear form them.

.....

(Lattimore, *Odyssey* 321-22)

The following interpretation provides a few glimpses of the unique aesthetic effect of this translation that can happen only when it is read in this poetry layout.

The opposition of Odysseus and the suitors in Lattimore's translation is even more dramatized in poetry version than the prose version. The intensity of the conflict is foreshadowed in line 6 with "of many [suitors]" at the one end of the line contrasting "a very strong one [Odysseus]" at the other. In addition, in the poetry version, the highlighted places like line ends, such as lines 1, 5 ("company" is referring to the suitors), 6 ("one," on the other hand, is referring to Odysseus), 7, 14



and 18, allocated to the two parties. This adds subtle suspense from the natural pause of the position to what they might do in reaction, rendering the plot more dramatic. This arrangement also brings reinforcement to the story, when viewed with adjacent lines. For example, the fate of those suitors is foreshadowed with “suitors” of line 14 sandwiched by “scattered” in line 13 and “fallen” in line 15. The process of the death of Antinoös may be rendered dramatic already because of the syntactic arrangement Lattimore adopts. It becomes even more powerful viewed from the distant parallelism between the turns of lines 2 to 3 and of lines 10 to 11: i.e. “lifting up a fine two-handled/goblet of gold” and “from his stricken hand fell/the goblet.” The wine, reasonably red in colour, is lavishly enjoyed by the drinker from the goblet when the drinker has the chance to enjoy the pleasure of life, but, on the moment he loses his life, the goblet is given up and the blood shoots from his body. This parallelism amplifies the violence and the tragedy in the loss of his life by turning the wine and the goblet from a drink and a cup into the symbols of life and its source. Furthermore, with the poetry format, the text becomes live with the rhythm originating from metric patterns.

As shown above, any comparison between poetry translations, either from microscopic or macroscopic approaches, may not produce relevant criticism when the SP and the TP are not treated specifically as poetry but two pieces of prose. To

read poetry as poetry, it is necessary to investigate what makes poetry poetry first.

The next chapter will discuss this issue through both Chinese and Western traditions.

## II. What Makes Poetry Poetry

### Strangeness or Mimesis

#### Very Different But Both Poetry

Attempts have been made to find a common quality in poetry in both Western and Chinese literary traditions, traceable back at least as far as Aristotle (384-322 BC) and Confucius (551-479 BC). In Western literary tradition, the issue has been attacked pragmatically. Horace (65-8 BC) tried to entrust poets with a mission, stating “The aim of a poet is to inform or delight, or to combine together, in what he says, both pleasure and application to life” (Horace in Bate 56). What poetry is is not answered in this kind of statement, however, for this aim can be achieved by other genres. A more relevant approach to the question is to investigate the nature of poetic language. “[A] frequent concept in describing poetic use of language is that of ‘deviation’ from ordinary discourse, going back at least as far as the twenty-second chapter of Aristotle’s *Poetics*” (Beaugrande 16). Aristotle saw poetry as a text that is different from ordinary speech and would look strange in an ordinary context.<sup>31</sup> The

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<sup>31</sup> The following translations offer a clearer picture of what Aristotle might have meant to say on the issue: “On the other hand the Diction becomes distinguished and non-prosaic by the use of unfamiliar terms, i.e. strange words, metaphors, lengthened forms, and everything that deviates from the ordinary modes of speech. ... Their deviation from the ordinary words will, by making the language unlike that in general use, give it a non-prosaic appearance; and their having much in



importance of this “strangeness” is approached pragmatically by Joseph Addison (1672-1719), who stated, “Every thing that is new or uncommon raises a Pleasure in the Imagination, because it fills the Soul with an agreeable Surprise, gratifies its Curiosity, and gives it an Idea of which it was not before possest [sic]” (142).

Aristotle’s concept of poetry also finds echoes in the twentieth century. To Victor Shklovsky, a function of poetic language was to make the familiar seem unfamiliar (Erlich 176). Roman Jakobson held that “poetry is organized violence committed on ordinary speech” (Erlich, 219). Michael Riffaterre believes that those parts of the text of a poem that are strange are the keys to its beauty: “I cannot emphasize strongly enough that the obstacle that threatens meaning when seen in isolation at first reading is also the guideline to semiosis, the key to significance in the higher system, where the reader perceives it as part of a complex network.”

(*Semiotics* 6)

However, using “strangeness” as a criterion to see whether a text is poetry may be problematic. It is easier to tell whether a text is a poem or not than to define what

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common with the words in general use will give it the quality of clearness” (Fyfe, 59-60). “That diction, on the other hand, is lofty and raised above the common-place which employs unusual words. By unusual, I mean strange (or rare) words, metaphorical, lengthened—anything, in short, that differs from the normal idiom. ... For by deviating in exceptional cases from the normal idiom, the language will gain distinction; while, at the same time, the partial conformity with usage will give perspicuity” (Butcher, 101-2). “Impressive and above the ordinary is the diction that uses exotic language (by “exotic” I mean loan words, metaphor, lengthenings [sic], and all divergence from the standard). ... A major contribution to clarity and unusualness of diction is made by lengthenings, shortenings, and modifications of words: contrast with the standard, and divergence from the usual, will create an out-of-the-ordinary impression; but the presence of some usual forms will preserve clarity” (Halliwell, 109-11).

poetry is. Texts as different from each other as “l(a” by e. e. cummings, which can hardly be recited,<sup>32</sup> and “The Eagle” by Tennyson, which is rich in music, can both readily and generally be accepted as poetry. It is apparent that their languages are strange in very different ways and different degrees. The two poems are cited below:

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iness.

(cummings 673)

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

(Tennyson 118)

Of the two, “l(a” is arguably the stranger one, since it deviates farther from ordinary speech for the absence of both syntactic and phonetic structures. Only when one sees that the poem is in fact composed of “loneliness” and “a leaf falls,” stretched out and interwoven with each other, can one begin to interpret what the

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<sup>32</sup> “Cummings’ pomes are immediately recognizable, with their eccentric use of typography, punctuation, syntax, and visual form. Cummings is best known a lyric poet who wrote on themes of love and nature, but he was also one of the most effective poetic satirists of his age, often using his poems as skillful critiques of governmental policies and the ills of an overly consumeristic society” (Beach 103).



poet might try to convey. This strangeness is an important source of poetry of this work. In contrast, "The Eagle" can hardly be called "strange" textually as it takes only a few steps away from ordinary speech by using rhyme and a few syntactic reverses. One of the reasons for this absence of "strangeness" may be that these steps are also used in other literary genres and are not completely absent on other occasions either. Since both of them can vary this much in the degree of strangeness and both be poetry, it may be reasonable to assume that if we create a poetry spectrum based on degrees of strangeness, there will be some poems at the one end that are similar to ordinary speech.

## Does Looking Alike Matters?

On strangeness as the necessary condition of poetry, Michael Riffaterre points out that although one may often find words rarely used and peculiar grammatical preference as features of poetry, there has already been an equally substantial corpus of poetry that is composed of words and grammar used in everyday language (*Semiotics* 1). It is a generic phenomenon in all literatures<sup>33</sup> that "poetry keeps swinging back and forth, tending first one way, then the other. The choice between

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<sup>33</sup> Riffaterre's wording here is, "In all literatures with a long enough history, we observe that poetry keeps swinging back and forth, tending first one way, then the other" (*Semiotics* 1). However, this pool probably covers only Western literature. In the case of Chinese literature, the pendulum often swings between imitation of ancient models and innovation.



alternatives is dictated by the evolution of taste and by continually changing esthetic concepts" (*Semiotics* 1). On the concept of "strangeness," Riffaterre argues that with the presence of rhetoric devices or linguistic phenomena, such as metaphor, metonymy, ambiguity or obscurity, as the definition of poetry, "words are judged in relation to things, and the text is judged in comparison to reality" (Riffaterre, *Text* 26). And, he warns that an "interpretation [of a poem] takes place along the vertical axis that defines the relation between the sign and what it represents and links the signifier to the signified and the referent" will miss a more important thing concerning what poetry is: "the intratextual relations" (Riffaterre, *Text* 26-7). Riffaterre illustrates his point with a passage from Charles Baudelaire:

Quand la terre est changée en un cageot humide,  
Où l'Espérance, comme une chauve-souris,  
S'en va battant les murs de son aile timide  
Et se cognant la tête aux plafonds pourris.

(*Text* 27)

He argues that if readers try to interpret this image of a bat with what the animal biologically is in the real world they will find it difficult to arrive at an aesthetically solid interpretation of how this master of aviation in the real world should fail to perform a smooth flight here. Or they may interpret it far-fetchedly. Riffaterre argues that Roman Jakobson, for example, associating the "chauve-souris" with one in the

real world, unnecessarily claims to hear the noise of a bat's wings in the consonants of the first two lines. Riffaterre points out that readers should look for answers "intratextually," i.e. in the poem itself. The bat from this light is not treated as an actual animal but an "antibird." The image of "bat" as an "antibird" is justified, according to Riffaterre, by the "intratextual relations": the poem is talking about the world that has turned into a dungeon of despair, an antithesis of "l'espérance," and therefore the symbol of "l'espérance," the dove, is justifiably appearing as its antithetical counterpart, the bat (*Text* 26-30).<sup>34</sup> From this light, there will be neither problem nor difficulty in fitting the bad performance of the animal described therein with aesthetic consistency into the whole picture presented by the poem.

To replace the notion of strangeness, Riffaterre proposes a definition of poetry: "poetry expresses concepts and things by indirection. To put it simply, a poem says one thing and means another" (*Semiotics* 2). However, when one looks into his theory it is clear that the crux is still left untouched. Riffaterre proposes, "Indirection is produced by displacing, distorting, or creating meaning" (*Semiotics* 2). By "displacing," he exemplifies that the meaning of a sign may be shifted, such as with metaphor and metonymy. This does not help much in defining what poetry is

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<sup>34</sup> Of course, Baudelaire intends to "balances banality and originality, the prosaic and the melodic, to emphasize the eternal interdependence of opposites." This artistic intention also explains the combination of images of opposite significances. See "Fleurs du Mal, Les" in *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*.

since it is generically used in other literary genres. By “distorting,” he means “ambiguity, contradiction, or nonsense.” The first two parts of this item, like “displacing,” are not exclusive to poetry and the third part may be interpreted as a form of strangeness. By “creating meaning” he means, “textual space serves as a principle of organization for making signs out of linguistic items that may not be meaningful otherwise.”<sup>35</sup> This item can also be explained away with “strangeness” since it is about how what is familiar has assumed other meaning under a certain textual arrangement. The target Riffaterre really tries to aim at is not “strangeness” as it turns out, for he then moves on to argue, “Among these three kinds of indirection signs, one factor recurs: all of them *threaten the literary representation of reality, or mimesis*” (*Semiotics 2*). Again, both “l(a” and “The Eagle” defies the notion of anti-mimesis in Riffaterre’s definition of poetry.

“l(a,” textually imitates the falling of a leaf. Readers see in it a vivid picture of a leaf falling vertically from somewhere above with a few turns in the air to the ground below. The poet achieves this by arranging the letters into a narrow vertical stripe to imitate the vertical fall, using the reverse orders of the two letters that “leaf” and “falls” share, i.e. “a” and “f,” to visualize the fluttering motion of the leaf in the air, and leaving the last line with most letters to form a horizontal line that resembles

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<sup>35</sup> Riffaterre produces several examples of this catalogue, including “symmetry, rhyme, or semantic equivalences between positional homologues in stanza” (*Semiotics 2*).



the ground below.

“The Eagle” embodies the bird in sound and in imagery on the basis of biological facts. In the first line of the first stanza, the poet gives the bird’s feet and claws a close-up description, i.e. “crooked hands.” The harshness and the curling of tongue in the three consonant clusters composed of plosive and retroflex imitate these qualities of the roughness and the shape of the bird’s part in reality. When the lens moves away from the bird to the space where it is situated in the second and third lines, a flowing sequence of liquids, including four /l/’s and two /r/’s, carries readers’ imagination to the far away land. When the lens returns to the bird at the end of the first stanza, readers suddenly encounter again a set of consonant cluster composed of plosive, “stands.”

In metric structure, the first lines of the two stanzas march in an even and stately iambic pace—a phonetic parallelism with the bird on one hand and the sea on the other that effectively offsets the superior quality of the former. This is interestingly contrasted with lines five and six, which can be read as iambic. The difference is that the feet in lines five and six are not as evenly substantial as in lines one and four. In these two lines that top the stanzas, the feet all fall on syllables of similar semantic substance, i.e. on the stress of noun, verb or keyword: in line one, “clasps,” “crag,” “crook-,” and “hands,” and in line four, “wrin-,” “sea,” “-eath,” and

“crawls.” In contrast, in lines five and six, one foot in each line falls on words that are much less semantically substantial, i.e. “from” and “like.” The latter, especially, is deafened by the dactylic “thunderbolt”<sup>36</sup> that follows. This arrangement brings a parallelism of two pairs of dactyls: “close to the” and “ring’d with the” in the first stanza and “watches from,” and “thunderbolt” in the second. They endow a grandeur both to the status (the former two dactyls) and the action (the latter two) of this feathered king. The first two dactyls top their lines and then trot with two trochees, ending in an emphatic catalectic third.<sup>37</sup> The stately straightforwardness and a powerful end to these lines add dramatic vividness to the picture. The second two, in contrast, are inlaid. The creature acts with kingly leisure. The first dactyl in stanza two starts with a anacrusis-like “he” hints a shot of the whole bird, scanning the sea with iambic confidence, instead of a close up on the claws. In the following line, the opening three short trots of “and like a,” situated between the two sauntering iambs in the last line and the resonant dactyl that follows, produce a different atmosphere. The situation suddenly becomes tense—something is coming. Then the dramatic “thunderbolt” breaks, rounding up with a confident iamb “he falls” that ends the poem in climax. This is an exquisite production of metric mosaic that is aesthetically

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<sup>36</sup> This arrangement along with the two dactyls in the first stanza offset, in a very immediate retrospect, “thunderbolt” as an aesthetically valid dactyl, instead of just a passage from one iamb to another, i.e. from “a thun-” to “-derbolt.” But, of course, this is done with aesthetical reason as shown.

<sup>37</sup> As shown here, “sun in lonely lands” and “azure world, he stands.” [scanning needed]

coherent in each single syllable, whose phonetic arrangement conforms closely to what it signifies in imitation.

From the viewpoint of imagery, the fact that this carnivorous bird is situated at the top of the food chain justifies the image of a supreme ruler described in the poem, under whom even the ocean acts like a subject to its maharaja and the mountains, dwarfed by the bird's status, are but walls. The image of a thunderbolt, a symbol of Zeus's power, implies that the status of the bird is as high as this god and finds physical basis in its hunting behaviour, often darting vertically downward to its prey. Tennyson's eagle uses the biological facts of this bird as the indispensable ground of its aesthetical effect while Beaudelaire's anti-bird, the bat, would be damaged aesthetically if readers associated it with the qualities of its counterpart in reality.

Both "l(a)" and "The Eagle" exemplify texts where mimesis is an important element of the aesthetic effect. They still are poetry. Therefore, mimesis is not a relevant condition with which one can define poetry. The thesis will first proceed to a survey of Chinese poetics for more light on what the two poems may share as poetry before investigating whether Western and Chinese poetic systems share any common ground and its significance to poetry translation.



## Beyond and Between

### The Mind and the Emotion

#### *Straight from the Mind*

In Chinese tradition as well as in Confucian tradition, one of the earliest remarks on what is poetry is in the chapter of “*Yao Dian*” (The Book of the Emperor Yao) of *Shang Shu* (The History),<sup>38</sup> “Poetry speaks one’s mind. The song enlivens the speech with melodies. The voice goes with the melodies. The regulation harmonizes the voice”<sup>39</sup> (Qu Wanli, 18). In the Chapter of “*Yue Ji*” (On Music) of *Li Ji* (The Book of Ritual),<sup>40</sup> this is elaborated as follows, “when emotions occur in the mind, it will be expressed with speech. When speech is not enough to express it fully, it will be expressed in sighing and chanting. When sighing and chanting are not to express it fully, it will be sung. When singing is not enough to expressed it fully, one will start to wave his hands and stamp his feet and dance.”<sup>41</sup> It was also advanced in the general preface of *Shi Jing* (The Book of Songs),<sup>42</sup> “Poetry is the embodiment

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<sup>38</sup> I.e. 尚書堯典.

<sup>39</sup> I.e. 詩言志歌永言聲依永律和聲.

<sup>40</sup> I.e. 禮記樂記.

<sup>41</sup> I.e. 情動於中而形於言言之不足故嗟嘆之嗟嘆之不足故永歌之永歌之不足不知手之舞之足之蹈之也.

<sup>42</sup> The *Shi Jing* annotated by Mao Heng, i.e. *Mao Shi*, is one of the earliest and most authoritative version of *Shi Jing* that survived. The general preface to the whole anthology, i.e. *maoshi daxu* 毛詩大序, is generally thought to be written by Mao Heng (ca 200 BC) or, even, Zi Xia. Huang Yong Wu insists that Mao’s annotation is the annotation. Huang argues, Mao Heng studied under Xun Zi 荀子 whose learning of *Shi Jing* could trace back to Zi Xia 子夏 (Huang, *Shixue* 271-84). Zi Xia studied *Shi Jing* directly from Confucius and was praised by the master for his achievement in his study, as recorded in *The Analect*.

of one's thoughts. What is thoughts in mind becomes poetry when uttered."<sup>43</sup>

Confucius himself elaborated this relationship between poetry and poet's mind. One of the most influential remarks on poetics is what Confucius advanced to sum up *Shi Jing*, "The three hundred poems in *Shi Jing* can be summed up in one statement: A mind without indecent thoughts"<sup>44</sup> (Zhu Xi, *Lun Yu* 6-7). A moralistic trait is added to what poetry should be. This issue of decency is interestingly annotated in a passage in *Zuo Zhuang* (Zuo's Annotation of *Chun Qiu*).<sup>45</sup> In the passage of the twenty-seventh year of Duke Xiang of Lu, there is a remark saying, "The purpose of poetry is to speak the mind."<sup>46</sup> What follows is that the person who makes the statement tells the receiver, "if what is in you mind offends the Duke, the poem may bring imminent danger to the speaker." What connotes in this remark has already gone beyond the border of poetry and into a literal interpretation of the concept. Qu Yuan (ca 340-278 BC), arguably the first major poet in Chinese literary tradition, whose masterpiece long poem "Li Sao" (Inflicted with Worries)<sup>47</sup> and *Shi Jing* have

<sup>43</sup> I.e. 詩者志之所之也在心爲志發言爲詩. See Fu Lipu, 65

<sup>44</sup> I.e. 詩三百一言以蔽之思無邪. See Zhu Xi, *Lun Yu* 6-7. In fact, Confucius was quoting from *Shi Jing* itself. This phrase comes from "the Chapter of Yong, the Ode of the Dukedom Lu," i.e. 魯頌駉篇, very near the end of the anthology. See Huang, *Zhongguo* 109-121.

<sup>45</sup> I.e. 左傳.

<sup>46</sup> I.e. 詩以言志. It is recorded in the section of the twenty-seventh year of Duke Xiang (Yu Xianhao, 1143). In the context, Wen Zi, the speaker of the remark, is saying that the poetry by Bo reveals his mind and there is some accusation of the Duke that might bring danger to himself. (Yu Xianhao, 1143-44). The original text is offered here: 文子告叔向曰伯有將爲戮矣詩以言志志誣其上而公怨之以爲賓榮其能久乎幸而後亡....

<sup>47</sup> I.e. 離騷.

long be regarded as the two prototypes of poetry,<sup>48</sup> also interjects in “Li Sao”: “With emotions as mine, how can I hold it back till eternity?” (Xiao, *Wen Xuan* 461).<sup>49</sup> The Daoist tradition also takes a similar stance on this issue, though having invested much less attention. Zhuang Zi, once expressed explicitly in the chapter of “*Tian Xia*” (the World)<sup>50</sup> that “the purpose of poetry is to express the mind.”<sup>51</sup>

### *A Literary Turn*

Lu Ji (261-303)<sup>52</sup> proposed in his “*Wen Fu*” (On Literature),<sup>53</sup> *shi yuan qin* (poetry originates in emotions),<sup>54</sup> and turned this concept into a new direction by bringing in the element of emotion. This revolutionary step needs to be traced back to another critic, Cao Pi (187-226).<sup>55</sup> The Six Dynasties (c 221-589 AD)<sup>56</sup> witnessed a series of literary theorists that marked a new era of Chinese literature, including

<sup>48</sup> Liu Xie uses a chapter to discuss the issue. See Liu Xie 45-48. Yan Yu starts the poetry tradition from “Li Sao.” See Yan Yu 444.

<sup>49</sup> I.e. 懷朕情而不發兮余焉能忍與此終古.

<sup>50</sup> I.e. 天下.

<sup>51</sup> I.e. 詩以道志 (Zhuang Zi 370). There have been doubts of the authenticity of the book *Zhuang Zi*. It is generally agreed that it contained works by Zhuang’s disciples and later scholars of Daoism, dated as late as the Jin Dynasty (266-420 AD), as well as the philosopher himself. The earliest existing version was edited and annotated by Guo Xiang (?-312 AD), in which this chapter was placed at the last. In fact, it has been suspected by modern scholars that Guo might have inserted his own writings into this classic (Zhuang Zi 9-50). However, the authenticity became a less relevant issue when one considered that the surviving text had already brought influence and shaped Daoism before it was brought up by later scholars.

<sup>52</sup> I.e. 陸機.

<sup>53</sup> I.e. 文賦.

<sup>54</sup> This translation is an interpretation when the statement stands outside its context.

<sup>55</sup> I.e. 曹丕, aka Emperor Wen (on throne from 220-26 AD) of the Wei dynasty (220-65 AD).

<sup>56</sup> The Six Dynasties include the Kingdom Wu (222-80 AD) in the period of the Three Kingdoms, the East Jin Dynasty (317-420 AD), and the four Southern Dynasties (including Song, Qi, Liang, Chen) (420-589 AD), the capital of all of which was Jian Kang, i.e. today’s Nan Jing. Among the three kingdoms of the period of Three Kingdoms, Kingdom Wei is regarded as the political orthodox that succeeded the Han Dynasty and preceded the Jin Dynasty.



Cao Pi, Lu Ji, Liu Xie, Zhong Rong (468-518),<sup>57</sup> who had gradually geared this tradition away from the moralistic ideology from Confucianism.<sup>58</sup> The Period of Jian An (196-219)<sup>59</sup> was the first peak in the literary development of this period, the utilitarian ideology of Confucian poetics began to crumble with the fall of the Han Dynasty and a new poetics that emphasized on the aesthetic aspect of poetry emerged in the groundbreaking works of literary criticism by several of the most important literary critics in Chinese literature.<sup>60</sup> Cao Pi proposed a statement in his “*Dianlun Lunwen*” (“On Literature” in *Anthology of Criticism*) (Xiao, *Wen Xuan* 720-21)<sup>61</sup> that marked the dawn of a new era of literary criticism and poetics. Firstly, he advanced, “*shi* [poetry] and *fu* [verse] requires the quality of *li*.”<sup>62</sup> The character *li*

<sup>57</sup> I.e. 鍾嶸. While Zhong Rong only focused on the criticism of five-character poetry produced up to his time, Liu Xie produced the most comprehensive single volume of literary criticism in Chinese literary tradition.

<sup>58</sup> The concept of poetry as a genre became gradually mature in the Han dynasty, when academic writings and literature were termed differently. Historians, such as Liu Xin (d 23 AD) [i.e. 劉歆] and Ban Gu (32-92 AD) [i.e. 班固] already set up a section for the history of *shi* (poetry) and *fu* (verse) (Guo Shaoyu, 28).

<sup>59</sup> During these last years of the East Han Dynasty, the empire had been divided among warlords. The most powerful of which was the Cao's, who unified the northern half of China. Cao Cao, a statesman, military leader and poet, with his two sons, Cao Pi and Cao Zhi, and his grandson, Cao Rui, formed the literary centre of the time and, with the newly established five-character verse, developed a heroic style that was unique to this period. See Tao Kanru 219-24; *Zhongguo Wenxue Fazhangshi* 243-44; Guo Shaoyu 47-50.

<sup>60</sup> In the West Han dynasty (206 BC-8 AD) before Emperor Wu (on throne from 140 to 74 AD), Daoism, with the royal support from Emperor Wen to Emperor Jing (179-140 BC), enjoyed about four decades of superior status over other schools of thoughts. After Emperor Wu came to throne and secured his status when his grandmother Empress Dou, who supported Daoism, past away, Confucianism was established as the orthodox of thoughts in the following three centuries while all the other schools of thoughts, including Daoism, were banished. But the table began to turn around since Confucianism failed to provide a sound basis for political and social stability as the East Han Dynasty deteriorated. See chapter 17, Vol. 1 of Li Fangchen.

<sup>61</sup> I.e. 典論論文. This essay, included in *The Literary Anthology by Prince Zhao Ming* 昭明文選 (5<sup>th</sup> century AD), is the only part left of a book by Cao Pi, titled as *Dianlun* (literally, “an anthology of criticism”), which has been lost. The essay, originally only titled as “*lunwen*” (literally, “on literature”), is usually mentioned with the title its source as “*Dianlun Lunwen*” (Xiao Tong, 720-21).

<sup>62</sup> Basically, *shi* at that time is a poetic genre close to lyric, and *fu* is rhymed prose. The two, major

means both “beautiful” and “parallel” (Gao, 麗). In the case of *fu*, the latter meaning becomes significant since parallelism is the dominant quality in the form of the genre.

It is for the first meaning that makes the statement stands out as a milestone.

According to Cao Pi, poetry, unlike other genres, should focus on its aesthetic quality.

This was a distinct step away from the utilitarianism and moralism of Confucian poetics for the independence of poetry and literary criticism, moving to a territory where the aesthetic side of poetry could develop.

### *An Emotional Turn*

Lu Ji in his “*Wen Fu*” set up a system with issues relevant to literature, including the origin and process of creation, creativity, genres, writing technique, style, critical criteria, crises in creativity and the use of literature.<sup>63</sup> When analyzing the nature and emphasis of different genres, Lu argued, “poetry is beautiful and sophisticated because of the emotions it contains.”<sup>64</sup> Continuing what Cao started,

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poetic genres of the time, are used as metonymy of poetry. Cao Pi also includes three other genres into his list: i.e. official report 奏議, which needs to be elegant; argument 書論, which needs to contain clear logics and reasoning; epigraph, which needs to be concrete and honest. He argues that although all genre may shall the same origin but have evolved into different things. He also holds that the four genres require different talents in their writers and few can master all of them. (Xiao Tong, 720)

<sup>63</sup> The work is included in *Wen Xuan* by Xiao Tong. See Xiao Tong pp 239-44. Lu Chi did not make it explicit to cover these issues nor give any title to each section, which can only be distinguished by certain expression or syntax. Different translators may adopt different sectioning and provide section titles, such as in the translations by E. R. Hughes (Hughes, 94-108), Shih-hsiang Chen, Sam Hamill and Achilles Fang.

<sup>64</sup> I.e. 詩緣情而綺靡. See Cao Pi in Xiao Tong 720. The characters for my translation, “beautiful and sophisticated,” are *qi* 綺 and *mi* 靡, the first which may mean embroidery as a noun or beautiful as an adjective and the second luxurious, beautiful as adjective or silk as noun. See these entries in



Lu took another significant step away from the moralistic aspect of Confucian poetics by shifting the creative spring of poetry from the mind to “the emotions.” Since emotions are open to influence, this shift involve another element, Nature, in the process. Lu Ji starts the description of the origin of a poem from how the mind resonates with the changing seasons: “As the seasons replace one another, endless thoughts come and go with the changing world—fallen leaves sadden me when the autumn prevails while tender branches please me in fragrant spring.”<sup>65</sup>

Liu Xie in the chapter “*Ming Shi*”<sup>66</sup> (An Apology for Poetry) of his *Wenxin Diaolong* (Literary Mind, Carving a Dragon)<sup>67</sup> continues this concept of resonance between the mind and the nature. Liu states, “one could resonate with nature and have emotions, and when resonating with the nature, one states the mind in poetry.”<sup>68</sup> Upon the basis of *shi yan zhi*<sup>69</sup> (poetry states the mind), the emotions are endowed with more importance. Despite the kaleidoscopic nuances of individual emotions, the establishment of the structure of one’s poem should be based on the emotion that ignites the creativity.<sup>70</sup> When this is taken proper care of, everything will fit in

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*Zhengzhong Xing Yin Yi Da Cidian.*

<sup>65</sup> I.e. 遵四時以嘆逝瞻萬物而思紛悲落葉於勁秋喜柔條於芳春 (Lu Ji in Xiao Tong, 240).

<sup>66</sup> I.e. 明詩.

<sup>67</sup> I.e. 文心雕龍. It encompasses almost all literary genres up to this time. Five chapters are contributed to the major poetic genres. See Liu Xie, chapters 5 to 9.

<sup>68</sup> I.e. 應物斯感感物吟志 (Liu Xie, 65).

<sup>69</sup> I.e. 詩言志.

<sup>70</sup> I.e. 夫情致異區文變殊術莫不因情立體即體成勢. (Liu Xie, 529).



properly, for when emotions are roused, what should be said will emerge.<sup>71</sup> A poem with more technique than emotion is doomed to be shallow.<sup>72</sup>

With these developments, the concept of *shi yan zhi*, i.e. “poetry speaks the mind,” has persisted up to the Qing dynasty. Ye Xie (1627-1703) held, “the mind and the heart is the foundation of poetry.”<sup>73</sup> In its criticism, a poem is praised as superb when it expresses something that is already in everybody’s mind while, somehow, no one can or ever express it, which, as Zhao Yi (1727-1814) argued, is also the very reason why great poets can win the hearts of the posterity.<sup>74</sup> At the centre the greatness of poetry is, as Chen Tingchao (1853-1892) claimed, sincerity.<sup>75</sup> This is a natural conclusion when one holds *shi yan zhi*. The moralistic side of this concept somehow survived too. It was believed that “one can do anything morally right with a righteous mind—it is especially important to one who is learning poetry,” as Xue Xue<sup>76</sup> (1680-1770) advanced.

To relate poetry to the direct output of the mind is only a step toward the concept that the poetry a poem emits is holistic and beyond the text. It is on this basis that the following concepts merged to form the holism in Chinese poetics and that

<sup>71</sup> I.e. 夫情動而言形 (Liu Xie, 505).

<sup>72</sup> I.e. 繁采寡情味之必厭 (Liu Xie, 539).

<sup>73</sup> I.e. 詩之基其人之胸襟是也. See Ye Xie, *Shi Yuan* 17.

<sup>74</sup> I.e. 人人意中所有卻未有人道過一經說出人人如其意之所欲出而易於流播遂足傳當事而名後世...佳句皆是先得人心所同. See Zhao Yi, *Oubei* 171.

<sup>75</sup> I.e. 無論詩古文詞推到極處總以一誠為主. See Chen Tingchao, *Baiyu Zhai* 211.

<sup>76</sup> I.e. 薛雪. I.e. 心正則無不正學詩者尤為喫緊. See Xue Xue, *Yipiao* 92.

the alien concept of *wu*, epiphany, from Buddhism could be engrafted onto this tradition and thrive.

## Holistic and Beyond

### *Less is More, and Discard the Words*

The whole universe, from the heavens to the humanity, has been regarded as a text that can be read since the time of Yi Jin.<sup>77</sup> The origin of the language can, arguably, be traced back to the invention of *ba gua*<sup>78</sup> (the eight trigrams, each of which is composed of either or both elements of *Yin* and *Yang*), i.e. the symbols that express every phenomenon of Nature, created by the mythical emperor Fu Xi.<sup>79</sup> It is only natural that literature, a derivative of this system, can be one of the embodiments of the chemistry of *Yin* and *Yang* and the way of Nature. The mechanism of the chemistry of *Yin* and *Yang* is thoroughly discussed in *Zhou Yi* and its quality of simplicity is manifested as follows,

*Qian*<sup>80</sup> [i. e. the heaven, the ultimate embodiment of *Yang*] is knowledgeable because of its easiness; *Kun*<sup>81</sup> [i. e. the earth, the ultimate embodiment of *Yin*] is capable for its simplicity. The easiness makes it easy to understand; the

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<sup>77</sup> See The Explanation of the Ben Trigrams 賁卦彖辭 (Zhu Xi, *Yi Jing* 155) and the First Chapter of the Second Book of Annotation 繫辭下傳第一章 (Zhu, *Yi Jing* 410).

<sup>78</sup> I.e. 八卦.

<sup>79</sup> I.e. 伏羲, one of the ancient sage kings in Chinese mythology.

<sup>80</sup> I.e. 乾.

<sup>81</sup> I.e. 坤.

simplicity makes it easy to follow. What is easy to understand is approachable, and what is easy to follow is achievable. ....The meaning of *Yin* and *Yang* is manifested by the moon and the sun; the goodness of easiness and simplicity is manifested by the ultimate virtue<sup>82</sup>

This background forms the basis for valuing the faculty to express as much as possible with as little as possible—just as the whole universe is in fact composed of two elements, *Yin* and *Yang*.

Another origin of this minimalism can be traced back to early Daoism. Lao Zi showed his distrust of language in his *Dao Te Jin* or *Lao Zi*.<sup>83</sup> Lao Zi started his book with a self-subverting remark: “A Way that can be expressed in language is not The Way” (Chen, *Lao* 1). As significantly, he stated in the concluding chapter, “faithful language is not beautiful and beautiful language is not faithful.”<sup>84</sup> Zhuang Zi also shares this distrust of language and takes one step further to treat it as a tool that should be discarded after it has served its purpose. He argued that one should discard the text or words, *yan* (the words or expression), when the receiver of a

<sup>82</sup> The Chinese text: 乾以易知坤以簡能易則易知簡則易從易知則有親易從則有功. See Zhu Xi, *Yi Jing* 374. 陰陽之義配日月易簡之善配至德. See Zhu Xi, *Yi Jing* 385.

<sup>83</sup> According to Sima Qian (135-86 BC), who left us the earliest biography of the philosopher in his *Shi Ji* 史記, Lao Zi would not have left any work had the commander of the border passage, Yin Xi, not earnestly requested Lao Zi to leave some written work before his retiring into complete reclusion. The text has been named after the philosopher *Lao Zi* or as *Dao De Jing*, as the term *dao de* (literally, the way and the virtue) was mentioned as the subject of the work. These three characters mean, in order, the way/ virtue/a classic, which were mentioned in *Shi Ji*. In the chapter of Lao Zi, it is recorded that Lao Zi wrote a book containing two parts to explicate the meaning of Dao and De in about five thousand characters before he left. Confucius once sought consultation on ritual issues from him, which implies they should be contemporary. See Sima, page 2185-87.

<sup>84</sup> It has been argued that the first two phrases of chapter fifty-six, “Those who know don’t say it and those who say it don’t know” 知者不言言者不知 (Chen, *Lao* 56), was a misplacement and should be the opening of this chapter. In both subject and syntax, they are closer to chapter eighty-one. This statement echoes the self-subverting tone of the opening.



passage of language gets hold of its meaning, *yi* (the meanings or connotation), just as one should put the fishing net aside when the fish is caught.<sup>85</sup> What is important is what one gets from the language or, in other words, what exists beyond the language to be seen. This distrust in the medium is attacked from another aspect in the chapter "*Qi Wu Lun*" (on the equality of all beings)<sup>86</sup> of *Zhuang Zi*. He implies a relativism in aesthetic appreciation. All beings are the same on the issue of what is delicious or beautiful to them—they all desire it—but where they find the quality varies drastically. What is beautiful to human beings, such as Mao Chiang and Li Ji, two famous beauties in ancient times, will frighten other species of beings. Xi Shi and Li [different character from the one in "Li Ji"] is the same from the viewpoint of Dao, the Way.<sup>87</sup> The medium of beauty or deliciousness for one being may terrify or disgust another being. This concept anticipates the concept that the medium itself is not the locus where one can find the quality in question.

As a result, it is regarded as one of the highest literary faculty to express the most sophisticated idea with the simplest expression. The ultimate embodiment of this inclination can be summed up by a famous remark of Sikong Tu in his *ErshiSi*

<sup>85</sup> I.e. 荃者所以在魚得魚而忘荃蹄者所以在兔得兔而忘蹄言者所以在意得意而忘言吾安得夫忘言之人而與之言哉。 See *Zhuang Zi* 313.

<sup>86</sup> I.e. 齊物論.

<sup>87</sup> See the chapter of 齊物論, *Zhuang Zi* 60-76. Paradoxically, later generations adopted it as praise for the female beauty, meaning the opposite to its original context. For example, the idiom, *chenyu luoyan* 沈魚落雁 (fish sink into the depth and geese fall from sky, both out of the natural fear of wild lives for human beings) originated from this chapter. What is beautiful to a human being may look terrifying to other species of creature. They cannot but hide themselves on the first sight of those famous ancient beauties.

*Sipin* (Twenty-four Types of Poetry), *bu zhuo yi zi jin de feng liu* (i.e. “showing no trace of explicit aesthetic intention while achieving every possible aesthetic effect”).<sup>88</sup> This document will be discussed later.

### *Qi and Metamorphosis*

Cao Pi was one of the earliest critics to view literature, including poetry, with the concept of *qi*, i.e. air, energy or a holistic body. In his “*Dianlun Lunwun*”<sup>89</sup> (“On Literature” in *Anthology of Criticism*) (Xiao 720-21), Cao proposed that the crucial element of a literary work is its *qi*,<sup>90</sup> the holistic body formed by and beyond the whole text of the work. This marked a dawn to a new era of literary criticism and poetics, which is different from the tradition of *shi yan zhi*. Mencius<sup>91</sup> (372-289 BC) once said, “I am skilled at cultivating the great *qi* of integrity. ... Cultivated with righteous deeds, this *qi* can fill the universe. ...” (Zhu Xi, *Mencius* 38). Although Mencius adds a moralistic element into the already long standing concept of *qi*, his statement provides an authoritative basis for the theory that the human being and the

<sup>88</sup> I.e. 不著一字盡得風流. See Sun Liankui 26.

<sup>89</sup> I.e. 典論論文.

<sup>90</sup> *Qi* may mean the mist and clouds in the sky, the abstract body of any object, including the heaven and the earth. It is stated in *Liji* (Book of Ritual), “In the first month of the spring, the *qi* of heaven falls and that of the earth rises” [i.e. 孟春之月天氣下降地氣上騰]. See Zhen Xuan 542. It means also the breath, for example, as in the chapter or “Xiang Dang” of *Lun Yu* 論語, “holding *qi* as if not breathing” [i.e. 屏氣似不息者]. See Zhu Xi, *Lun Yu* 63.

<sup>91</sup> I.e. 孟子.

universe can merge as one through *qi*<sup>92</sup> as the medium. Poetry, as an extension of one's faculty, presumably is an extension of one's *qi*. Cao used music as a comparison to explain what this *qi* was and held that the quality of the performance of a piece of music was more than performing the notation and the rhythm accurately.<sup>93</sup> The melody heard in a musical performance is beyond the sound produced, so is the aesthetic quality read in a literary work beyond the text. He then elaborates that if the *qi*, which exists beyond the sounds performed, does not support the performance properly, it is useless even when one performs the notes flawlessly. It is the *qi* one hears beyond the sound of music that counts. So, it is the *qi*, beyond the text of a poem one reads, that matters.

The concept of *qi* was developed in *Shi Pin* (The Classification of Poets)<sup>94</sup> by Zhong Rong.<sup>95</sup> Zhong started the book with the following statement, "*Qi* influences nature and in turn nature influences the human beings. Emotion resonates with the influence and is expressed as poetry."<sup>96</sup> While Cao focused on *qi* a literary

<sup>92</sup> This can partly explain an observation of I. A. Richards, "The point will need further discussion, but we must from the outset realize that psychology and physics are not two separated studies for early Chinese thought (or for later); and that, however metaphysically abhorrent it may be to us, the mind and its objects are not set over against one another for Mencius, or (I understand) for any of his fellows." (Richards, *Mencius* 5)

<sup>93</sup> I.e. 文以氣為主氣之清濁有體不可力強而致譬諸音樂曲度雖均節奏同檢至於引氣不齊巧拙有素雖在父兄不能以移子弟. See Xiao Toang 720.

<sup>94</sup> I.e. 詩品.

<sup>95</sup> This book was the first systematic evaluation of five-character poems up to Zhong. However, he evaluates the works of each poet collectively instead of individual poem. The poets are classified into three *pin*'s, i.e. levels: the upper, the middle and the lower. Each is provided with a passage of criticism.

<sup>96</sup> I.e. 氣之動物物之感人故搖蕩性情諸舞詠. See Liao, *Shipin* 18.



work may possess, Zhong expanded the concept and traced the *qi* outward to the whole world. In his criticism of the poetry of Ran Ji (210-263),<sup>97</sup> he stated, “what he describes in his poetry are things before our eyes and ears and yet the emotion reaches the farthest horizons. The readers will see and hear the vastness in his work as the ballads and court songs in *Shi Jin* beyond the text, forgetting the vulgar and the near and achieving the far and the great”.<sup>98</sup> Zhong adopted Mencius’s concept of *qi* for his poetics and arrived at a conclusion that the invisible body of the work may reach beyond the text, “making the heaven and the earth resonate with it and the gods and spirits moved by it.”<sup>99</sup>

Along with the concept of *qi*, the concept of *hua*,<sup>100</sup> i.e. “to transform into” or “to become one with,” from Daoism merges naturally and forms a part of the holism of Chinese poetics. In the chapter “Da Sheng”<sup>101</sup> (literally, knowing life), Zhuang Zi explains that Chui,<sup>102</sup> a craftsman known for his superb skill, can achieve his excellent workmanship only because his fingers become one with the thing he is handling and he needs not mind what he is doing while doing everything perfectly.<sup>103</sup> Su Shi<sup>104</sup> (1037-1101 AD) elaborated this concept in his poem, “On the painting of

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<sup>97</sup> I.e. 阮藉.

<sup>98</sup> I.e. 言在耳目之內情寄八荒之表洋洋乎會於風雅使人忘其鄙近自致遠大. See Zhong Rong 1.

<sup>99</sup> I.e. 動天地感鬼神莫近於詩. See Zhong Rong 1.

<sup>100</sup> I.e. 化.

<sup>101</sup> I.e. 達生.

<sup>102</sup> I.e. 倕.

<sup>103</sup> I.e. 工倕旋而蓋規矩指與物化不以心稽故其靈台一而不桎. See Zhuang Zi 222-23.

<sup>104</sup> I.e. 蘇軾.

bamboo by Yu Ke, owned by Cao Buzhi,”<sup>105</sup> and claimed that only Zhuang Zi can understand how the painter has achieved the excellence in the painting. Su argued in the poem, “the painter merges [*hua*] with the bamboo as one and creates endless originality” (source). As the *qi* of an artist/poet can merge and resonate with the nature, the beauty of the object, part of its *qi*, can be transmitted through the artist best when he/she unifies with it and expresses as if the artist and the object is as one, experiencing it holistically.

Down to the Qing dynasty, it has generally been accepted that the aesthetical superiority of a poem lies beyond its text. Chen Tingzhao,<sup>106</sup> a critic of late Qing dynasty, insists, “a good poem is one where there is poetry beyond its surface of poetic text.”<sup>107</sup> Zhao Yi, when commenting on the regulated verses by Li Bai, a genre at which Li Bai is not best, describes that the heroism of his style simply overflows the lines and ink of the text.<sup>108</sup> Yuan Mei<sup>109</sup> argues, “it is useless to read only the text as if swallowing without chewing the nutritionless stuff. He/she can only learn it by breaking the text and obtaining the spirit beyond it.”<sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> I.e. 書晁補之藏與可畫竹. The poem is listed as follows: 與可畫竹時見竹不見人豈獨不見人  
嗒然遺其身其身與竹化無窮出清新莊周世無有誰知此凝神. See Wang Suizhao 186.

<sup>106</sup> I.e. 陳廷焯.

<sup>107</sup> I.e. 詩外有詩,方是好詩 (Chen Tingzhao, 210)

<sup>108</sup> I.e. 工麗之中別有一種英爽之氣溢於行墨外 (Zhao Yi, 4).

<sup>109</sup> I.e. 袁枚 (1716-1797).

<sup>110</sup> I.e. 蓋破其卷取其神非囿圖用糟粕也 (Yuan Mei, 102).

## From Savouring to Epiphany

### *Savouring: Up to Zhong Rong*

This tradition has spent much effort on describing the nature of this quality that exists between and beyond the text, but not much so far on how, exactly, readers obtain it while reading the physical text. Zhong Rong was one of the first critics to adopt gustatory metaphor to embody this façade of the poetic aesthetics, rooted in the metaphorical system of the philosophy of Confucianism and Daoism and the language itself. Confucius adopted a gustatory metaphor to compare the difficulty of knowing the Way to that of knowing the true flavour in food, and states, “Everyone eats and yet few can taste.”<sup>111</sup> He once claimed that meat, supposedly delicious, had tasted of nothing to him for three months after having heard the music of Shao<sup>112</sup>--an implication of the compatibility between aesthetic influence and gustation. Sensing the beauty of the music of Shao, which stands for perfect beauty and virtue,<sup>113</sup> is like tasting something much more delicious than any mortal food. Mencius, in describing a moral dilemma, compares it to the difficulty in choosing between two delicious foods, fish and bear’s paw.<sup>114</sup>

Gustatory metaphor is not absent in Daoism either. Lao Zi declares, “one

<sup>111</sup> I.e. 子曰言道不行智者過而愚者不及...人莫不飲食鮮能知味 (Zhu Xi, *Zhong Yong* in *Si Shu* 4).

<sup>112</sup> I.e. 聞韶三月不知肉味 (Zhu Xi, *Lun Yu* in *Si Shu* 43-44) 述而

<sup>113</sup> See the note on *Si Shu* 44.

<sup>114</sup> I.e. 魚我所欲也熊掌亦我所欲也二者不可得兼捨魚而取熊掌者也生亦我所欲也義亦我所欲也二者不可得兼捨生而取義者也 (Zhu Xi, *Meng Zi* in *Si Shu* 166-67)



should do 'nothing', perform 'non-performance,' and taste 'non-taste'."<sup>115</sup> He compares taste the tasteless to how great deeds are achieved when one knows the art of doing nothing. Zhuang Zi adopts this sense as one of his metaphor for human nature, by paralleling different gustatory preferences of human beings, moose, worms and owls.<sup>116</sup> He also parallels the enjoyment of this sense with those of vision and audition and the desire for power as several natural human inclinations. This sense, he argues, is one of the things that human beings enjoy most among easy life, beautiful clothes and sweet music.<sup>117</sup> The language itself adopts gustatory goodness as the metonymy for all beauty. The character *mei*<sup>118</sup> for "beautiful, goodness" consists of "goat" on the upper part and "large" on the lower part as the flesh of a large fat goat was considered the paradigm of delicious food in ancient time.<sup>119</sup>

In the preface of *Shi Pin*, Zhong Rong suggests that the highest level of poetic achievement is "to create a quality that can sustain an endless flavour and ignite emotion."<sup>120</sup> With this imagery, he argues, "When there is more reasoning [in a poem] than needed, the flavour [of the poem] will turn thin."<sup>121</sup> He also uses it in his

<sup>115</sup> I.e. 爲無爲事無事味無味 (Chen Zhu, 61).

<sup>116</sup> I.e. 民食芻豢麋鹿食薦蟣蛆甘帶鴟鴞嗜鼠四者孰知正味 (Zhuang Zi 65).

<sup>117</sup> I.e. 所樂者身安厚味美服好色聲音者也 (Zhuang Zi 211).

<sup>118</sup> I.e. 美.

<sup>119</sup> See the entry, "美" in *Da Cidian* and *Zhengzhong Xing Yin Yi Da Cidian* (Zhengzhong Etymological Dictionary) 正中形音義大辭典

<sup>120</sup> I.e. 味之者無極聞之者動心. See Zhong Rong 10.

<sup>121</sup> I.e. 理過其辭淡乎寡味. See Zhong Rong 6.

critical comparison of different genres: “the five-character poetry is the prime poetic genre and a genre that out-flavours the rest.”<sup>122</sup> “The ultimate achievement of poetry is the endless flavour that lingers, which touches the heart of the reader.”<sup>123</sup> While vision and audition are applied to metaphorize that quality beyond text, gustation is adopted to embody how the readers process the input from reading, when he argues, “the colour [of the poem] as fresh as green leek and the music [of the poem] sound resonant and melodious, both left readers savouring the flavour of the poem and never grown tired.”<sup>124</sup> “One can savor the luxury in the poems.”<sup>125</sup>

Before Zhong Rong, the issue of what makes poetry poetry was viewed from the nature of the poetry. With his proposition of the gustatory concept, this issue is approached from the reader’s side. The intuitive and holistic nature of this sense foreshadows the intuitiveness and holism in poetry reading when the cognition of the beauty of the poem is concerned. This anticipates a more complete intuitive and holistic cognitive concept of poetry reading when Buddhism comes and merges into the picture.

<sup>122</sup> I.e. 五言居文詞之要是眾作之有滋味者. See Zhong Rong 9.

<sup>123</sup> I.e. 使味之者無極聞之者動心是詩之至也. See Zhong Rong 10.

<sup>124</sup> I.e. 調彩葱菁音韻鏗鏘使人味之亹亹不倦. This is a comment on Zhang Xie 張協 [ca 255-310], whom Zhong classifies to the top rank. See Zhong Rong 55. (Liao, *Shipin* 104).

<sup>125</sup> I.e. 華靡可諷味焉. This is a comment on Ying Qu 應璩 [ca 190-252], whom Zhong classifies to the middle rank. See Zhong Rong 77.



## *Epiphany: After Chan Buddhism*

Buddhism reached China near the end of the West Han Dynasty<sup>126</sup> and the scripts of the school of Dhyana had been introduced as early,<sup>127</sup> which developed into Chan Buddhism<sup>128</sup> in China. This was the most important Chinese sect of Buddhism where classical Chinese poetry is concerned, as shown later in the thesis. Bodhidharma,<sup>129</sup> who arrived at China in the Six Dynasties<sup>130</sup> was deemed as the first master of Chan Buddhism in China,<sup>131</sup> and with the approach of a translating strategy that adopted Daoism terminology for that of Buddhism, marked the first significant leap in the domestication of Chan Buddhism.<sup>132</sup> Its influence on Chinese poetry can be examined in several ways.

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<sup>126</sup> One of the earliest records is an annotation by Pei Songzhi 裴松之 [372-451 AD] in *The History of Three Kingdoms* (三國誌). It shows that as early as 2 BC, some members of the Imperial Academy were studying Buddhist sacred script. (Guo, *Fuojiao* 1-2) And by mid first century AD, there were members of imperial family who became Buddhist. (Guo, *Fuojiao* 10-12) And the Emperor Huan 桓帝 (at throne from 147 to 167 AD) of the East Han Dynasty became the first emperor to become Buddhist (Guo, *Fuojiao* 13-14).

<sup>127</sup> A Mahayana school of Buddhism relying on meditation as a method of enlightenment (Merriment-Webster Unabridged Dictionary), which developed in China into the Chan Buddhism.

<sup>128</sup> Originally, *chan* 禪 means "to give up the throne to a sage" but was adopted as the transliteration of *dhyana*. See the entry "禪" in *Da Cidian*.

<sup>129</sup> I.e. 達摩.

<sup>130</sup> See Xiao Lihua 5-6.

<sup>131</sup> See *Jingde Chuandeng Lu* pp 42-50 and *Wudeng Huiyuan*.

<sup>132</sup> As for the establishment of a Chinese Dhyana sect, i.e. Chan Buddhism, Guo Peng holds that the credit should fall on Hui Neng (638-7134), the sixth master from Bodhidharma. Guo argues, before Hui Neng, there was only Chan cultivation and study, and it was Hui Neng who completed the domestication of this branch of Buddhism and established a Chinese Buddhist sect (*Fuojiao* 194). Guan Shiqian also holds similar opinion. He points out that it was till Hui Neng that the mind-to-mind communication of *Zushi Chan* 祖師禪 (literally, "Founding Mentor Chan") which focuses on the epiphany of its cultivator was first established as a Chinese version of dhyana, which adapted *Rulai Dhyana* 如來禪 that requires the cultivator to go through the cultivation of Four Dhyanas and Eight Concentrations 四禪八定. The term *Zushi Chan* 祖師禪 comes from the section on the Chan master Yangshan Huiji 仰山慧寂 in scroll five of *Jingde Chuandeng Lu* (Shi Daoyuan 193). The central script of the two stages were different: while Bodhidharma relied heavily on 楞嚴經, it is replaced by *The Diamond Sutra* 金剛經 as the core script after Hui Neng.



Firstly, it brought about the ebbing of *xuanxue shi* (Daoist metaphysical poetry),<sup>133</sup> between the East Jin Dynasty and the Song Dynasty of the Southern Dynasties (early 5<sup>th</sup> century AD), which gave way to *shan shui shi* (the mountain and water poetry). As Liu Xie pointed out, "Only when Lao Zhi and Zhuang Zi subsided did the mountain and water emerge" (Liu, *Wenxing* 67). This is the sign, as Zhou Yukai argues, that Buddhism had assimilated Daoist thoughts and evolved into a Chinese version, i.e. Chan Buddhism, that became one of the major elements in Chinese classic poetry (*Changzhong* 262). Nature in poetry before this period had been the background to offset the mind of the poet in Confucian tradition<sup>134</sup> or the object of philosophical thinking in Daoist tradition. As Chan Buddhism argues that every part of the universe can be the embodiment of *fu xing*, i.e. the nature of Buddha,<sup>135</sup> and in corollary the embodiment of Confucian truth or Daoist truth, the mountain and the water, the synecdoche of Nature in Chinese tradition, became a major subject for poetry. It is not a coincidence that Xie Lingyun, the master of

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<sup>133</sup> I.e. 玄學詩.

<sup>134</sup> One of the earliest example may be Confucius's remark, "People of wisdom enjoy the water and people of *ren* enjoy the mountain," i.e. 智者樂水仁者樂山. See Zhu Xi, *Run Yu* 38. According to Zhu, the physical qualities of the mountain and the water embody the qualities of these to virtues, for the wise comprehend the world so well that they can handle the changing world without any difficulty as flowing water never stops while the *ren* always hold fast to their principle and virtue as a mountain never moves (Zhu Xi, *Lun Yu* 38-9). It has been defined in many ways by Confucius himself in *The Anelects* [to be continued]. And when Dao Yuanming wrote "Picking chryanthamys by eastern fence, I saw South Mountain, only casually" (採菊東籬下悠然見南山), the South Mountain and what the reclusive life implied in it serves only the back ground of his mental status and the life of a literatus without office. See Xiao Tong, 425.

<sup>135</sup> I.e. 佛性. See Book Six of *Jingde Chuandeng Lu*.

Mountain and Water poetry, appeared in this period.<sup>136</sup>

Secondly, the need to recreate the phonetic element in Sanskrit text in the translation of Buddhist sacred scripts ignited the crystallization of the tonal system of the Chinese language, due to the contribution of poetry theorists including Shen Yue<sup>137</sup> (441-513 AD). This system became one of the crucial bases of the prosody upon which *jin ti shi* (modern poetry) was established, including mainly *lu shi* (regulated verse) and *jue ju* (quatrain) that flourished and matured in the Tang Dynasty.<sup>138</sup> With the revolutionary development and establishment of the tonal system and prosody, the composition of poetry was never the same after the Six Dynasties. Before this transition, poetry generally reflected the state of mind as in Confucian tradition. Poets did not apply technique or prosody conscientiously but let it come naturally as they were inspired with poetry when an occasion rose. After the transition, poetry composition could not but include artificial maneuvering of the newly developed techniques and prosody, rather than a purely spontaneous art.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> I.e. 謝靈運. Zhou Yukai argued that it was Xie himself who ignited the transition and Zhou pointed out that it was not coincidence Xie Lingyun was a Daoist thinker who was converted to Buddhist (Zhou, *Chanzhong* 262). In fact, Xie, although an aristocrat, was sent to Buddhist temple to be raised by the monk, because it was believed at that time that, as a worthless civilian, the child might have better chance of avoiding evil spirit and therefore of survival. Xie is also one of few, if not the only one, major poets in Chinese literature to become a translator of Buddhist sacred scripts.

<sup>137</sup> I.e. 沈約. Shen was one of the founders of the four-intonation system and a prosodic criticism. See Guo Shaoyu, *Pipingshi* 82-88; Huazheng Shuju 294-96; Tan Zhengbi 133-34.

<sup>138</sup> It is termed modern in contrast to the genres originated in earlier dynasties. It is from this period down that poetry is composed with strict prosody.

<sup>139</sup> By the end of the Six dynasties to the early Tang dynasty, theorists, including Chen Zhi-ang 陳子昂 (661-702), had sensed the danger of trite formalism in pursuing of prosodic perfection. See *Huazheng* 437-38.

Thirdly and most importantly, Chan Buddhism provided a cognitive theory for the aesthetics of classical Chinese poetry that Confucianism, which treated poetry from a utilitarian approach, and Daoism, which distrusted language, both neglected.

The central concept of this sect is that there is a Buddha in every person and one needs only to see that. A way to achieve this enlightenment is through *dun wu*.<sup>140</sup>

This tradition of *dun wu* (literally, "sudden enlightenment") or epiphany, established by Hui Neng,<sup>141</sup> can be traced back to an anecdote in Book One of *Wudeng*

*Huiyuan*.<sup>142</sup>

Sakimunei in a meeting on the Spiritual Mount held a flower between fingers and showed it to the congregation. All remained silent, wondering what this gesture could mean, except Uruvela-Kassapa, who betrayed a smile of comprehension. Sakimunei then said, "I am the true way, the *nibbana*. The truth is formless. The way is in the ultimate subtlety. It will be based upon no script and a new cult will be established. This mission is yours, Uruvela-Kassapa."<sup>143</sup>

This legendary incident presented the prototype of Chan Buddhism: the

<sup>140</sup> I.e. 頓悟.

<sup>141</sup> Bodhidharma based his teaching on 楞伽經. However, as this sect developed, the central script adopted for the sect changed from 維摩經, 圓覺經, 華嚴經, 法華經, 般若經 and, under Hui Neng, to 金剛經 (The Diamond Sutra). See Sun introduction and Guang introduction. *Wedeng Huiyuan* recorded a legend of how Hui Neng convinced Hong Ren 弘忍, the fifth leader of the sect, to choose him as successor by the famous gatha 偈 he wrote in response to She Shiu 神秀, an elder fellow disciple who believed in "graduate enlightenment" 漸悟.

<sup>142</sup> I.e. 五燈會元. One of the several major sources of anecdotes and statements of Chinese Chan Buddhism, including *Liuzhu Dashi Fabao Tanjing* (六祖大師法寶壇經) (the Yuan Dynasty), *Jingde Chuandeng Lu* (景德傳燈錄) (ca 1004). In twentieth century, more documents of earlier time have been unearth in Duhuang 敦煌 (Sun, *Shi* 8-9).

<sup>143</sup> I.e. 世尊在靈山會上拈花示衆是時衆皆默然唯迦葉尊者破顏微笑世尊曰吾有正法眼藏涅槃妙心實相無相微妙法門不立文字教外別傳付囑摩訶迦葉. See Shi Puji 10.



characteristic non-verbal communication (i.e., showing a flower to the disciples), the non-verbal reaction of epiphany (i.e., betraying a smile), the core concepts (i.e., truth is formless and the way is in the ultimate subtlety), and a rudimental guideline for missionary work (no script and a new cult). The mergence of these concepts with domestic Chinese poetics is well demonstrated in two of the key documents of Chinese poetics, discussed in the following section. By the time of the Tang dynasty, the merging of the three main sources of Chinese poetics was completely matured. It can be seen in the two key documents discussed below.

## Two Key Documents: A Metapoem<sup>144</sup> and a System

### Ershisi Shipin—a Metapoem

Sikong Tu,<sup>145</sup> in his “metapoem” (Chen Guoqiu, *Ershisi* 11), *Ershisi Shipin* (Twenty-four Styles of Poetry),<sup>146</sup> produced a poetry series composed of twenty-four poems of six tetra-character couplets, each embodying a poetic quality.<sup>147</sup> As Sikong did not enumerate these sections, critics have been holding different opinions whether the work should be interpreted as one linearly organized system or as a

<sup>144</sup> The thesis means “a poem on poetry” here, instead of what Holmes means in his Fan.

<sup>145</sup> I.e. 司空圖.

<sup>146</sup> I.e. 二十四詩品.

<sup>147</sup> There have been different opinions on whether the work should be seen as a long poem or twenty-four short ones and whether they are systematically arranged or a list of independent poetic qualities. Each section starts with a two-character term stating the quality, followed by a poem of twelve four-character lines that are meant to interpret and embody the quality.

collection of twenty-four individual qualities.<sup>148</sup> Whichever the case it is, what is important is that Sikong Tu (837-908)<sup>149</sup> presents each quality with an independent passage possessing it for readers to see directly for themselves. The see-it-yourself approach echoes the epiphany of Chan Buddhism, which is interwoven with Daoist terminology.

Each passage is composed mainly of two constituents: images that embody the quality for readers to see the quality for themselves, and the description of and/or the criticism on that quality. The proportion and the organization of the two parts vary among the twenty four passages. Some are composed only of images without criticism or theorization. "*Dian Ya*"<sup>150</sup> (gracefulness) is made up of five images with a concluding remark: a spring wine drinking party admiring the rain outside a simple cottage, the company of fine scholars in a grove of slender bamboo, white clouds with two birds following each other with ease when it just turns fine, *qin* lies in green shades with waterfall above, flowers fallen speechlessly and the poet, as the chrysanthemum, tranquil, and a closing remark, "what graceful passages of the year

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<sup>148</sup> Some critics holds that the twenty-four items can be further classified into several subjects. Some, such as Zhu Dongrun, go as far as divide them into "the life of poets," "the thoughts," "poets and the nature," "the poetry," and "different types of creativity" (*Pipingshi* 99).

<sup>149</sup> The glossing of the title, "ershisi/ shi/ pin," are "twenty-four/(poetry or poetic)/(character or class or quality or to taste). The last character is ambiguous both semantically and grammatically. It has been translated at least into "modes," "orders," "moods," and "properties" (Chen Guoqiu, *Ershisi* 33). Herbert G. Giles ended the chapter of Tang poetry with Sikong Tu with the following comment before a complete translation of the poem: "The following philosophical poem, consisting of twenty-four apparently unconnected stanzas, is admirably adapted to exhibit the form under which pure Daoism commends itself to the mind of a cultivated scholar" (*History* 179). On Sikong Tu's life span, see Wang Runhua, *Sikong* 21-2.

<sup>150</sup> I.e. 典雅.



to write about; something worth reading indeed!”

The majority consists both. There are four types of arrangement: 1) the string of images concludes with the description of and/or the criticism of that quality; 2) the string of images embraces the latter; 3) the image string is inlaid into the latter; 4) the string of images follows the description of and/or the criticism on that quality. In “*Qian Nong*” (exquisite beauty),<sup>151</sup> the first four couplets present four images that the poet meant to use to embody the quality: a brook in spring, glimpses of a beautiful lady in the tranquil valley, a blooming peach tree by water in a windy sunny day and a curved footpath beneath willows with singing oriels. The last two couplets describe how this quality can stay fresh by leaving an open end and renewing old material.<sup>152</sup> In “*Qing Qi*” (original freshness),<sup>153</sup> the first four couplets produce a picture of a elegant hermit wandering in delicate pine woods over a clear stream where snow shines in the sun and a fisherman happens to be on the other side.<sup>154</sup> The fifth couplet describes that the spirit originates from such antiqueness strangeness that it is thin yet unlimited.<sup>155</sup> Sikong exemplifies it in the last couplet with an image of moonrise and autumn air. In “*Hun Xiong*” (magnificent holism),<sup>156</sup> on the other hand, there is only an image, scattered clouds driven by strong winds

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<sup>151</sup> I.e. 纖穠.

<sup>152</sup> I.e. 乘之愈往識之愈真如將不盡與古爲新 (Sun Liankui, 15).

<sup>153</sup> I.e. 清奇.

<sup>154</sup> See Chen Guoqiu 89.

<sup>155</sup> I.e. 神出古異澹不可收 (Sun Liankui, 34).

<sup>156</sup> I.e. 渾雄.



across the sky, in the fourth couplet,<sup>157</sup> embedded in descriptive criticism of this quality. In “*Xi Lian*” (cleanse and refine),<sup>158</sup> the passage starts with simile of alchemy to explain how these two processes, i.e. *xi* and *lian*, can transform the crudest material into precious items, just as silver and gold can be extracted from the ore. It ends in an image of cleanness and refinement, “the running water, this life, while the moon, the last.”<sup>159</sup>

*Ershisi Shipin* is an embodiment of the amalgamation of poetry, poetics and the literary thoughts from the three major philosophical systems, Daoism and Confucianism and Buddhism. The concept that quintessence of poetry existing beyond the textual level, by the late Tang Dynasty, has become a keynote in classic Chinese poetry. Pointing out the limit of formal elements and explaining why one should surpass the text and reach the quintessence, Sikong states, “if someone can imitate a poem in form, that person departs from the quality even when he starts to lay his hand on it.”<sup>160</sup> Sikong argues that holistic aesthetic effect can be achieved when there is no explicit manoeuvre.<sup>161</sup> One of the ways in which this may happen, Sikong hints, is to adopt straightforward language and simple design (Chen Guoqiu 95). He compares the epiphany of the Way to an unexpected encounter with a hermit

<sup>157</sup> I.e. 荒荒油雲寥寥長風 (Sun Liankui, 11).

<sup>158</sup> I.e. 洗鍊 (Sun Liankui, 20).

<sup>159</sup> I.e. 流水今日明月前身 (Sun Liankui, 20).

<sup>160</sup> I.e. 脫有形似握手已違 (Sun Liankui, 13).

<sup>161</sup> It is stated in first couplet of “*han xu*” 不著一字盡得風流 (Sun Liankui, 26).

by the pine-shaded brook in the mountain.<sup>162</sup> When the poet is ready, he/she will find the voice of poetry as if hearing the Great Voice, which is silent.<sup>163</sup> The motif of unexpectedly encountering a hermit is significant for its emphasis of effortlessness. It presents a Daoist version of the Confucian concept of poetry of *shi yan zhi* (poetry states the mind). While Confucianism focuses on expressing the intellectual side of the mind, Daoism focuses on letting the true nature be revealed. In “*Xing Rong*” (descriptiveness),<sup>164</sup> Sikong also esteems the faculty of creating beauty beyond textual level as one that few poets have achieved<sup>165</sup> (Sikong in He 26).

In addition, Daoist and Buddhist concepts strike a balance throughout the series. For example, in “*Xiong Hun*,” the Daoist concept of the great use, *da yong*,<sup>166</sup> and true body, *zhen ti*,<sup>167</sup> (couplet one) when well cultivated, can prevail over the great void, *tai kong*,<sup>168</sup> a Buddhist concept (couplet three). In couplet five, “*chao hu xiang wai*”<sup>169</sup> (it reaches beyond the form [a Buddhist concept])/ *de qi huan zhong*<sup>170</sup> (and is found at the very centre [a Daoist concept]),” the two elements form a perfect

<sup>162</sup> A music instrument important in both Confucian and Daoist cultivation. [described and discussed more thoroughly in other section; to be reorganized]

<sup>163</sup> I.e. 取語甚直計思匪深忽逢幽人如見道心清澗之曲碧松之陰一客荷樵一客聽琴情性所至妙不自尋遇之自天泠然希音 (Sun Liankui, 37). “The Great Voice which is silent,” the last line, is a concept from the forty-first chapter of *Loa Zi*, *dayin xinshen* 大音希聲, literally “great voice, little sound.”

<sup>164</sup> I.e. 形容 (Sun Liankui, 39).

<sup>165</sup> I.e. 離形得似庶幾斯人 (Sun Liankui, 39).

<sup>166</sup> I.e. 大用 (Sun Liankui, 11).

<sup>167</sup> I.e. 真體 (Sun Liankui, 11).

<sup>168</sup> I.e. 太空 (Sun Liankui, 11).

<sup>169</sup> I.e. 超乎象外 (Sun Liankui, 11).

<sup>170</sup> I.e. 得其環中 (Sun Liankui, 11).

parallelism. The quality in question can only be achieved by surpassing the limit of *xiang*, appearance, and arrive at it in “*huan zhong*,” the centre of the Way. The passage, “*Gao Gu*,”<sup>171</sup> offers another example. The opening couplet, *ji ren cheng zhen/ shou ba fu ron*<sup>172</sup> (the exceptional one riding on the Truth/ holding a lotus in the hand), presents a portrait that is both Daoist and Buddhist—*ji ren*, a true human being who lives the way of Nature (a level that a Daoist pursues), holding a lotus (a symbol of purity and a metonym of the level of Bodhisattva).<sup>173</sup>

### Canglang Shihua:<sup>174</sup> *A System*

*Canglang Shihua* (Observations on Poetry by Canglang) by Yan Yu<sup>175</sup> (ca 1195-1245) has been generally acknowledged as one of the pivotal texts of Chinese poetics.<sup>176</sup> It stands out for at least two reasons. Firstly, Yan Yu does not include *Shi Jing* in his system, a text on which almost all previous theories were based. Yan,

<sup>171</sup> I.e. 高古 (Sun Lianqui, 17).

<sup>172</sup> I.e. 畸人乘真手把芙蓉 (Sun Lianqui, 17). *Ji ren* literally means “strange people” but strange in the way that it is different from ordinary people.

<sup>173</sup> In fact, Sikong is not alone in merging the Daoist and Buddhist image. Li Bai, to name an example, in his “*Lu Shan Yao*” 廬山謠 (A Ballad of the Mountain Lu) presents a portrait of an immortal, when presenting himself to the Jade Emperor (a Daoist mythological element), carrying a lotus in the hand. A couplet in the poem reads, “Afar in the colourful clouds, there is an immortal,/Who is on the way to see the Jade Emperor with a lotus in hand....” (*Quan Tang Shi* 405).

<sup>174</sup> I.e. 滄浪詩話.

<sup>175</sup> I.e. 嚴羽.

<sup>176</sup> Yan Yu’s *Poetics of Canglang* is generally deemed as the most important poetics statement after Cao Pi’s “*Dialun Lunwun*” 典論論文 (An Apology of Literature), Lu Ji’s *Wen Fu* 文賦 (On Literature), Liu Xie’s *Wenxin Diaolong* 文心雕龍 (Literary Mind: the Carved Dragon), Zhong Rong’s *Shipin* 詩品 (Poetics) of the sixth century and Shikong Tu’s *Ershisi Shipin* 二十四詩品 (Twenty-four Styles of Poetry) of the ninth century. It became the theoretical inspiration of the major poetic schools of the Ming and Qing dynasties. See Chen Buohai 143-48, Liu Dezhong 80-91.



challenging this tradition in the second chapter, "Styles and Genres," states that *feng* (ballads), *ya* (court music) and *song* (odes)<sup>177</sup> have been lost and the literary tradition started from "*Li Sao*" (encountering worries)<sup>178</sup> by Qu Yuan (Yan Yu 444). But Yan does not mean to overturn the orthodox, for later in this chapter he states, "Poetry is the verbal revelation of your emotions and mind. And the beauty of the poetry of High Tang poets is simply a spontaneous aesthetic sensation" (Yan Yu 443). The juxtaposition of these two statements here shows that Yan, as a traditional Confucian scholar, accepts the revelation of one's mind as the basic purpose of poetry but what he tries to argue is that when the aesthetics and appreciation of poetry is concerned, a new approach other than Confucian *shi yan zhi* (poetry states the mind) is needed. This leads to the second point: Yan substitutes the concept of *miao wu*<sup>179</sup> (intuitive enlightenment) from Chan Buddhism<sup>180</sup> as the centre of his system for *shi yan zhi*, which was based on the interpretation of *Shi Jing*. Yan argues that to see the beauty in poetry or to compose great poetry needs the divine epiphany of the poetry, for "poetry requires a unique faculty that does not concern the scholarship [of its creator and reader] and contains unique beauty that does not concerns *li* (logics or reason)."<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> I.e. 風雅頌. They are the three parts of *Shi Jing*, which stand for three poetic genres for different themes and occasions.

<sup>178</sup> I.e. 離騷.

<sup>179</sup> I.e. 妙悟.

<sup>180</sup> See the section, "The Influence of the Chan cult of Dahui Zonghao [大慧宗杲] on Yan Yu" (Huang Jingjin, 179-88).

<sup>181</sup> I.e. 理. I.e. 詩有別材非關書也詩有別趣非關理也. See Yan Yu 443. To exemplify this concept, Yan Yu compares the works of two major poets of the Tang dynasty: Meng Haoran 孟浩然

To highlight his true innovation,<sup>182</sup> Yan starts this monumental literary document with the theory of *miao wu*, transplanted from Chan Buddhism.<sup>183</sup> By leaving *Shi Jing* out of his system, Yan can develop his theory more reasonably without the pagmatism of Confucian literary ideology and focuses on the rather mystic faculty of literary creativity. In the first chapter, “*Shi Bian*” (An Argument on Poetics)<sup>184</sup> Yan points out that what makes a true poet is the faculty of *miao wu*.<sup>185</sup> To gain this faculty, one should be absorbed completely in the poems by poets who have reached this level, “even to sleep with them as your pillow,”<sup>186</sup> and leave them to ferment in the mind. When the time comes, it comes—“one can enter the level only

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(689-740 AD) of High Tang, one of the masters of rural life poetry 田園詩, and Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824 AD) of Mid Tang, a giant in poetry, prose and Confucianism. Yan, however, comments here that the former is a better poet than the latter only because the poetry of the former has the quality of *miao wu*, despite the fact that the latter is decisively a more accomplished scholar. With this term, Yan refers ambiguously to both the faculty of a poet to compose poetry and the quality of the works that present poetry epiphanically instead of through sophisticated prosody or the poet's scholarship. See Yan Yu 442.

<sup>182</sup> He was perfectly conscious of his ambition. He claimed at the very beginning in the letter to Wu Jingxian 吳景仙, often an appendix to this document, “My ‘An Argument on Poetics’ is meant to solve this millennium old issue of poetry. It will startle the world and distinguish itself from the common criticism. It will be the universal theory for the very truth about poetry.” The original text of this passage is as follows, 僕之詩辨乃斷千百年公案誠驚世絕俗之譚至當歸一之論 (Yan Yu 457).

<sup>183</sup> This cult of Buddhism spread to Japan and developed a Japanese version. There is difference that is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, to avoid the confusion, the transliteration of the Chinese for the cult, *Chan*, is adopted, rather than its Japanese counterpart, *Zen*.

<sup>184</sup> I.e. 詩辯. The title and the contents of six chapters are listed as follows. “An Argument on Poetics” (詩辯): a system of his poetics, including the nature of poetry, the fundamentals of literary criticism and guidelines for learning poetics and poetry composition. “Styles and Genres” (詩體): a categorization of poetic styles and genres. “Rules for Composing Poetry” (詩法): do's and don't's for composing poetry. “Criticism on Past Major Poets” (詩評): criticism on past literary ages and major poets. “A Textual Criticism” (詩證): a study on textual issues. In most versions, it is followed by a letter in response to Wu Jing-xian 吳景仙, Yan's contemporary poet, in defending his Chan approach against contemporary criticism.

<sup>185</sup> See Huang Jingjin pp. 167-77.

<sup>186</sup> I.e. 枕藉觀之 (Yan Yu 443).

naturally.”<sup>187</sup> And even if one does not, Yan argues, he is still on the right track. So the first and crucial issue is *shi*,<sup>188</sup> the right mentality or conception: One should start with the right approach, aim high and learn only from the masters of the Han, Wei, Jin dynasties and High Tang Period, i.e. the prime time of the Tang dynasty (Yan Yu 442). This approach, he insists, is a top-down one: i.e. to focus on the best works only.<sup>189</sup> In Yan’s argument, those great poets are those who are enlightened of the true poetry like a Chan Buddhist who has been dawning of the Way.

On the relation between the form of a poem and the poetry therein, Yan approaches it by distinguishing two main types of epiphany in poetry. Yan Yu senses that although poetry theorists, such as Shen Yue, may solidify the prosodic system innate in the language and offer a framework for poets to base their work upon, a poet may become only skilled at its application but forget that it is the aesthetic effect from which this framework originated one should be after. In other words, one may learn and use the skill to compose a poem but, still, is not composing a poem. What is held to be indispensable knowledge for composing a poem becomes the very

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<sup>187</sup> I.e. 自然悟入 (Yan Yu 443).

<sup>188</sup> I.e. 識.

<sup>189</sup> Yan’s list of best periods of poetry includes the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), the Wei dynasty (220-265 AD), the Jin Dynasty (265-420 AD) and the High Tang dynasty (late 7<sup>th</sup> century to early 8<sup>th</sup> century), among which he further narrows down to the High Tang dynasty as the very one period whose poetic achievement is the model for all poets. One point curiously significant: the omission of the Latter Zhou Dynasty (770-256 BC) when *The Book of Songs*, one of the most important intertextual cores of the Chinese literature, was produced. It is argued that Yan tries to establish a literary criticism freed from the moralistic literary doctrines of Confucianism.



obstacle to producing true poetry.<sup>190</sup> This can explain why Yan adopted Xie Lingyun, arguably the first master in prosody, as the watershed of the two types of this epiphany in Chinese literary tradition. The type of epiphany before Xie is *bu jia wu* (the epiphany without resorting to epiphany).<sup>191</sup> As there was no obstacle of prosody to see through, those masters before Xie produced poetry directly from the mind/heart, i.e. to compose poetry directly from this source and holistically. According to Yan, the masterpieces of Han and Wei dynasties were composed so holistically that there is no way to analyze their beauty.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, Tao Qian is superior to Xie Lingyun because, while both achieving this level, Tao's poetry is simple and natural while Xie's is sophisticatedly polished, even though to a degree of perfection.<sup>193</sup> After Xie, on the other hand, it became *tou che zhi wu*,<sup>194</sup> (seeing-through epiphany) (Yan Yu 442). As the masters after Xie to High Tang were well equipped to apply the knowledge of prosody and needed to see through it, they

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<sup>190</sup> This paradox echoes a situation in Buddhism that triggers the origin of Chan cult. The sacred scripts, the fruit of the wisdom of the enlightened, are the record of the Way of Buddha and the study of the scripts has been a step in the process of seeing the Way and entering higher level. Paradoxically, the text and the cultivation themselves can become a trap. One may be well knowledgeable about the script but fail to see the Way beyond it.

The famous koan about the mirror can be useful here. When Hong Ren 弘忍 asked his disciples to use a gatha to embody their understanding of Buddhist cultivation, Shen Shiu, a learned and well cultivated monk, argued in his gatha that one should polish the mirror of heart to keep it away from any dust, while Hui Neng, who was a labor at the temple and later establish his own cult, disproved him with a concept that since the heart is not a mirror in the first place, the dust is not an issue at all (Shi Daoyuan 55). The point is, one may forget that it is the clarity of this mirror, not the activity of clearing the dust, that matters more. Prosody may be the rules critics deduct from poetry, but what matters more is the poetry.

<sup>191</sup> I.e. 不假悟.

<sup>192</sup> I.e. 漢魏之詩詞理意興無迹可求 (Yan Yu 450).

<sup>193</sup> I.e. 謝所不及陶者康樂之詩精工淵明之詩質而自然耳謝靈運之詩無一篇不佳 (Yan Yu 450).

<sup>194</sup> I.e. 透澈之悟.

composed poetry as if without it, paradoxically. Yan argues, “to sum up the beauty the poetry of High Tang in one quality, it would be *xing qu* [spontaneous aesthetic sensation]. ... Their beauty is traceless.”<sup>195</sup> This finds an echo in a comment on Wang Wei’s poetry in *Dream of the Red Chamber* five centuries later.<sup>196</sup> Cao Xueqin speaks through a character who is advised to read a sufficient number of poems by Li Bai, Du Fu and Wang Wei before starting to write anything (a method echoing Yan’s), “I really can’t tell why they are beautiful. But I can really ‘see’ the beauty. Sometimes they just don’t seem to make sense but after savouring them make perfect sense and are really moving... It feels like holding in my mouth an olive that seems to weigh a thousand *jin* [a weight unit] (Cao 737).<sup>197</sup> This metaphor embodies the experience when the text seems trivial, an olive, but the aesthetic effect is overwhelming, a thousand *jin*. In contrast these two types of enlightened poets, those lesser ones, who are skilled in using the framework and present nothing but this skill, are like those who are trapped in the so called “*chan* of the wild fox”<sup>198</sup> in Chan

<sup>195</sup> I.e. 盛唐諸人惟興趣...無迹可求. (Yan Yu 443).

<sup>196</sup> The novel was written in around the mid eighteenth century and circulated in hand-written copies. It was published in full length of one hundred and twenty chapters in the early nineties of the century. See introduction of Cao Xueqin.

<sup>197</sup> I.e. 據我看來,詩的好處有口裡說不出來的意思想去卻逼真的,有似乎無理的想去竟是有理有情的...唸在嘴裡像是有幾千斤重的橄欖 (Yan Yu 443). Later in the passage, three couplets from Wang Wei are adopted as example for how this can be the case. 大漠孤煙直長河落日圓, 日落江湖白潮來天地青 and 渡頭餘落日墟里上孤煙

<sup>198</sup> An allusion to a koan in Book Three of *Festival of Five Lanterns*(《五燈會元·卷三》). In the koan, a fox failed to transform into a human being in its Buddhist cultivation only because it held a misconception that a well-cultivated practitioner of Chan Buddhist is free from karma. When this misconception was corrected by Master Baizhan Huaihai, who epiphanized it that the issue was not to be free from karma but to see it face to face, the fox transcended the fauna form.

cultivation and doomed to stay so for good.

Yan holds that a true poet is one who masters the art to such excellence that there seems to be no exertion. Yan names Li Bai and Du Fu, out of all the masters he includes as essential, as the only two who reach the level of *ru shen*, divine excellence.<sup>199</sup> The two signs of superb poetry, Yan argues, are “the absence of dependence on theoretical framework” and “freedom from the fishing trap of language.”<sup>200</sup> The beauty of poetry, Yan holds, is something apparent and yet nowhere to be pin-pointed on the textual level like “the music in the air, the beauty in a face, the moon on the water and the image in a mirror” (Yan Yu 443). Among these four figurative definitions, two issues are manifested.

One is the paradox of the need for the medium, the text, and the detachment from it. This is well presented in the relationship between the reflected images (the moon/the images) and the reflecting medium (the water/the mirror). Without the water or mirror, there can be no reflection but the reflection is not the water or mirror. Poetry is like the moon on the water of text. The other, the more important one, is

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<sup>199</sup> I.e. 入神. Since the two characters *ru* 入 and *shen* 神 mean literally “enter” and “deity, spirit or mental status,” there is an argument that it means “empathy,” i.e. “entering a mental status.” However since the following text continues that it is the ultimate excellence a poet can ever reach and few poets, if any, ever reach it even for once in a while. It is improbable that Yan should be blind to the common literary knowledge that there had already been a number of poets in the Tang dynasty who were deemed outstanding for this quality in their poetry. Therefore, it is more relevant to interpret the phrase as “entering the level of deity,” i.e. divine excellence. See Huang pp 160-162.

<sup>200</sup> See Yan Yu 443. The latter, “the fishing trap of language,” is an allusion from *Zhuang Zhi*, where the master says just as one can leave the fish trap aside when one gets the fish, one should not cling to the text when one comprehends its meaning. See *Zhuang Zhi* 313.



that poetry is perceived holistically. The metaphors of music and good looks reveal that it is something you perceived as a whole. No single note itself can be recognized as music nor can any single feature in a face explain the good looks. It shows only when they come together. What makes a text poetry exists everywhere in it and yet is nowhere to pin point. The rhyme scheme of *aaba* cannot make a four-lined Chinese text a *jue ju*, even though it is an indispensable element of this genre. Neither does mere figurative language make poetic prose a poem, even though it makes up an important part of poetry. When we look inside the text for answers, we may encounter concrete structures such as prosody, rhyme scheme, allusion and metaphor, or induce certain patterns unique to the work. But with these elements alone, one cannot get hold of the essence of poetry.

## The Common Ground

### Holism

The generalization of what poetry is by William Hazlitt reveals a clue to what common ground “l(a)” and “The Eagle,” two very different samples of poetry, may share and, therefore, to what makes poetry poetry. Hazlitt states, “The best general notion which I can give of poetry is, that it is the natural impression of any object of event, by its vividness exciting an involuntary movement of imagination and passion,

and producing, by sympathy, a certain modulation of the voice, or sounds, expressing it" (Hazlitt in Bate 303). The truly crucial word here, this thesis argues, is "modulation." However, only when the three basic elements of language, i.e. the sound, the meaning and the form, all receive due attention, can the importance of "modulation" become clear.

Poetry is an art with language as its medium, like painting with paint and sculpturing with marble or metal. The elements that make up this medium are all resources for a poet. The common ground that "l(a)" and "The Eagle" share is that they are both outcomes of the highly sophisticated modulation of the elements of language. They are different only because the two poets adopt different combinations of these elements in their work. Cummings adopts the form as the major material while Tennyson adopts the sound, and they both "modulate" their choices along with the other element, the meaning, to arrive at their own aesthetic balance.

It is a linguistic phenomenon and not poetry that "leaf," which means the botanical unit of foliage, will perform the vertical downward movement of "fall," which also means the season, autumn, when this movement takes place. It is another linguistic phenomenon that "leaf" and "fall" share several letters of the alphabet in different orders. It becomes poetry only when the poet puts them in the way they are in "l(a)" and the poem would not exist if either of the words meant or spelled

otherwise or the poet saw the world differently. On the other hand, it may only be a vivid metaphor and not poetry when “thunderbolt,” the threateningly magnificent meteorological phenomenon coming down from the sky to the earth, is compared to a majestic carnivorous bird, “eagle.” It becomes poetry when the poet arranges “close to the” and “ring’d with the” to create a dactylic resonance with “thunderbolt” and “the Eagle” would not exist if either of these words were pronounced otherwise or the poet listened to the world differently. Each of these elements is as important as another and poetry happens only when they come together in the right way.

It is no wonder that it can be argued that it is the coincidences in language upon which poets depend for their art, as pointed out by Hazlitt, “[Poetry] is the perfect coincidence of the image and the words with the feeling we have, ...” (Hazlitt in Bate, 306). However, the credit the poet can claim with full legitimacy is, at least, the choice of words and the order they are arranged in. As Samuel Coleridge puts it, “poetry is the best words in best order” (in Rosenblatt 28). Cummings and Tennyson, through choosing certain words and arranging them in a certain order, produced poems that generate such unique aesthetic effect of which those words are potential. The touchstone of this achievement is that each part of the poem aesthetically resonates with another, and all cohere aesthetically, as demonstrated in the example above. Consequently, any alternation in any word or order would diminish the



aesthetic effect of the poem. From this light, the two poems offer a concrete definition of this “best,” i.e. that which is the most effective in generating aesthetic effect. When this level of “best” is achieved in a poem, one part of the poem can echo aesthetically with any other part of the poem.

Another common ground the two poems share emerges when this concept is viewed from the reader’s side. That is, they both need to be appreciated as a holistic unit to enjoy their beauty to the fullest. Of “l(a,” one of the aesthetic achievements is the unique embodiment of the curious relationship between the object world and the human emotion. The association between fallen leaves and the season of autumn and the emotion of loneliness is revived without banality because of its aesthetically effective arrangement. However, read in isolation, the reverse arrangement of *f* and *a* looks at most clever but forced, and without this verisimilitude of movement, the textual arrangement out of the word “loneliness” loses that emotional connection to the viewer in the poem.

As demonstrated above with the analysis of “a(l” and “The Eagle,” two very different types of poems, what makes poetry poetry can be summed up by Alexander Pope:

“In wit, as nature, what affects our hearts  
Is not th’exactness of peculiar parts;  
‘Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,

But the joint force and full result of all.  
 Thus when we view some well-proportion'd dome  
 (The world's just wonder, and ev'n thine, O Rome!)  
 No single parts unequally surprise,  
 All comes united to th'admiring eyes;  
 No monstrous height, or breadth, or length, appear;  
 The whole at once is bold, and regular."

(Pope, 8)

This metaphor echoes the holism in Chinese poetics that is summed up by Yan Yu in his *Canglang Shihua*, in which Yan states:

The absence of dependence on theoretical framework and the freedom from the fishing trap of language are signs of superb poetry. ... It can be traced no more than the antelopes that hang themselves by the horn on the trees at night. The wonder of it is crystal clear and yet beyond embodiment—like the music in the air, the beauty in a face, the moon on the water and the image in a mirror. The text may contain limited characters but the semantic nuances are endless.<sup>201</sup> [emphasis mine]

Chinese poetics reached this holism through a long formation of combining poetic concepts from Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. Whether there is any deviation from ordinary discourse or any mimesis of the nature in the text of poetry is not an issue as prominent as in the Western tradition. In contrast, Chinese poetics focuses on the nature and the locus of the beauty of a poem—a holistic quality that originates in the mind and exists beyond the text.

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<sup>201</sup> I.e. 不涉理路不落言筌者上也詩者吟詠情性也盛唐諸人惟在興趣羚羊掛角無跡可求故其妙處透徹玲瓏不可湊泊如空中之音相中之色水中之月鏡中之象言有盡而意無窮 (Yan Yu 443).

## Aberration and Norm

The appearance of the poetic genre free verse once aroused debate. Reviewed from the concept of the mutual generation of Yin and Yang from *Yi Jing*, this genre that seems to defy any set rule of poetry is in fact manifesting the true rule that poets of all times have been playing with. T. S. Eliot is right when he says, "*Vers libre* has not even the excuse of a polemic; it is a battle-cry of freedom, and there is no freedom in art" (Eliot, *To Criticize* 184). There is no game if there are no rules. He argues, "If *vers libre* is a genuine verse-form it will have a positive definition. And I can define it only in negatives: (1) absence of pattern, (2) absence of rhyme, (3) absence of metre" (Eliot, *To Criticize* 184). In fact, Eliot also admits that these absences are not absence per se but comparative absence in contrast to "Conservative Verse" (Eliot, *To Criticize* 189). When he discusses the significance of the rhymelessness of blank verse, Eliot states,

And, this liberation from rhyme might be as well a liberation *of* rhyme. Freed from its exacting task of supporting lame verse, it could be applied with greater effect where it is most needed. There are often passages in an unrhymed poem where rhyme is wanted for some special effect, for a sudden tightening-up, for a cumulative insistence, or for an abrupt change of mood.

(Eliot, *To Criticize* 189)



In fact, the same argument could be applied to pattern and metre. Those poets who adopt free verse, do it in order to liberate pattern and metre *from* “supporting a lame verse” so as to utilize them “where it most needed,” according to Eliot’s. If one would rethink the comparison between poetry and game, the answer would be close at hand. There is no game without rules but neither is there any game worth watching if the rules are not bent by the player’s originality in technique and skill from time to time. The emergence of free verse, which seemed to be the subversion of the past two millennia of Western poetry tradition where any poetic genre should have its own rules to observe, is in fact calling the world to rethink what the true rule of poetry is. Those rules, related to pattern, metre or rhyme, which have been taken for the rules, are only one side of the coin. Therefore, it is especially to define free verse “only in negatives” (Eliot, *To Criticize* 184)—because it is the opposite side that has not gotten due attention it deserves. As Eliot also discovers,

The most interesting verse which has yet been written in our language has been done either by taking a very simple form, like the iambic pentameter, and constantly withdrawing from it, or taking no form at all, and constantly approximating to a very simple one. It is this contrast between fixity and flux, this unperceived evasion of monotony, which is the very life of verse.  
[emphasis mine]

(Eliot, *To Criticize* 185)

The aberrative and normative parts of a poem, whatever type of verse it is, need each

other to achieve aesthetic success. "The division between Conservative Verse and vers libre does not exist," as Eliot concludes (Eliot, *To Criticize* 189). Without any aberration, the expectedness of rhyme, metre or any pattern would turn a poem into "a bad verse," but, without any inner rhyming, metric system or pattern of its own, a free verse cannot differentiate itself from prose or avoid degenerating into chaos.<sup>202</sup>

The true rule of poetry requires the poet to contrast and merge the "fixity and flux" (Eliot, *To Criticize* 185) in a certain way, for which the thesis will advance a model for its investigation later. According to Riffaterre, the unexpected maneuvering of stylistic devices stands out from the context by creating aesthetic effects and it is this that endows a literary work of art, or even a certain passage in it, its own style. There must be rules in each and every poem and the rules are meant to be broken with aesthetic significance. Paradoxically, this becomes a rule that also needs to be broken: no matter how avant-garde a poem is, it is somehow following conventional rules in its own way.

Liu Xie brings up *tong bian* (generality, exception)<sup>203</sup> and *ji zheng*

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<sup>202</sup> As when Eliot talks about the danger a blank verse poet may face: "The rejection of rhyme is not a leap at facility; on the contrary, it imposes a much severer strain upon the language. When the comforting echo of rhyme is removed, success or failure in the choice of words, in the sentence structure, in the order, is at once more apparent. Rhyme removed, the poet is at once held up to the standards of prose. Rhyme removed, much ethereal music leaps up from the word, music which has hitherto chirped unnoticed in the expanse of prose. Any rhyme forbidden, many Shagpats were unwigged" (Eliot, *To Criticize* to locate). The absence of metric correspondence will bring similar danger.

<sup>203</sup> I.e. 通變.

(aberration, norm)<sup>204</sup> in “*Zhi Yin*” (comprehending the music)<sup>205</sup> of *Wenxin*

*Diaolong*, where he points out the difficulty of a just criticism and investigates the six essential pairs of antithetic but mutually generating qualities of literary work.

Both, in fact, echo the antithesis of fixity (generality and norm) and flux (exception and aberration). This concept that opposites generate each other can be traced back to the concept of *Yin* and *Yang* from *Yi Jing*. It argues that the world will prosper if either of the two antithetic qualities replace and generate the other in the right way.

In corollary, a poet can accomplish higher aesthetic achievement if he/she can mediate the two antithetic qualities better. This concept also took a military detour before joining the literary field again in the Chinese tradition. It was applied in military philosophy at least as early as Sun Wu,<sup>206</sup> a military philosopher of the sixth century BC who has been quoted by important literary critics of later times, including Yan Yu. Sun argues, “As *ji* and *zheng* generate each other, the variation is infinite.”<sup>207</sup> The relationship between “flux” and “fixity” echoes the one between *ji* and *zheng* of Chinese poetics. For example, Yan compares the poetic art of Du Fu

<sup>204</sup> I.e. 奇正.

<sup>205</sup> I.e. 知音. The literal meaning of this chapter title is “comprehending what a music virtuoso truly wants to express.”

<sup>206</sup> I.e. 孫武. Sun (ca 535 BC), often referred to as Sun Zi 孫子, i.e. Master Sun, is esteemed as the master of military science, whose work, *Sun Zi Bing Fa* 孫子兵法 (The Military Philosophy of Master Sun), is treated as the essential text book for the military after him.

<sup>207</sup> I.e. 奇正相生不可勝窮 (there is no end to new combination of *ji* and *zheng*). The paragraph says: 聲不過五于聲之變不可勝聽也色不過五五色之變不可勝觀也味不過五五味之變不可勝嗜也戰勢不過奇正奇正之變不可勝窮也奇正相生如環之無端孰能窮之. See 孫子兵法勢篇 (Sun Zi 54-55). There is a comparison of the unpredictable alternation between *ji* and *zheng* to a full circle, a form that has no end from any direction. It echoes the diagram of *Taiji* which embodies the mutual generation of Yin and Yang.



with the military genius of Sun Wu, and Li Bai to that of Li Guang.<sup>208</sup> Accordingly, one may argue that the Conservative Verse poets offset the “flux” upon the “fixity” of the conventional patterns in the poetic genres they adopt, while the free verse poets offset the “fixity” of the rhyme, metre and pattern they tailor for individual poem upon the “flux” of the seeming absence of regular ones. Equally true to both types of poet is that the unique beauty of a poem comes from the “flux” of the poet’s originality and creativity offset upon the “fixity” of the convention and norm of their own time and place. And the great paradox is that one will not work without the other.

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<sup>208</sup> I.e. 李廣. Li Guan (165-119 BC) was a famous general of the Han dynasty. See the chapter on him in *Shi Ji* of Sima Qian.

### III. Contextual Relation and Poetry Reading

#### Between a Poem and its Readers

According to Thomas Carlyle, "A vein of Poetry exists in the hearts of all men; no man is made altogether of Poetry. We are all poets when we read a poem well" (Carlyle, *Hero* 82). In other words, poetry brings out the poets in people. It can also be argued that reading brings out the poetry in the text of a poem. If so, how readers read a text becomes crucial to what poetry is to come forth. Samuel Coleridge offers another view of what poetry reading is, suggesting that, "The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself" (Coleridge 6). The prize of the activity is not an answer at the end of it, but the activity itself and it is a journey that happens in the mind. Louise M. Rosenblatt provides a more precise description of aesthetic poetry reading as a journey, different from other types of reading:

In nonaesthetic reading, the reader's attention is focused primarily on what will remain as the residue *after* the reading ...[24] To designate this type of reading, in which the primary concern of the reader is with what he will carry

away from the reading, I have chosen the term 'efferent', 'to carry away.' ...

In aesthetic reading, in contrast, the reader's primary concern is with what happens *during* the actual reading event. ... [25] *In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text.*<sup>209</sup>

(Rosenblatt, *Reader* 23-5)

Rosenblatt points to the union of the reader and the work read but only in aesthetic kind of reading. She further points out, "Only if the reader turns his attention inward to his experience of 'the journey itself', will a poem happen" (*Reader* 28). T. S. Eliot also emphasizes, "... a valid interpretation, I believe, must be at the same time an interpretation of my own feelings when I read it" (*On Poetry* 114). The importance of individual input from the reader is highlighted here. Readers, as if living a micro-life, live the reading experience that grows out of the union of the work and themselves.

However, the way a poem is read in the reader's mind is more than a word-by-word importation as if one were typing a text onto a blank sheet of mind paper. As Rosenblatt puts it, "First of all, each reader was active, not a blank tape registering a ready-made message. He was actively involved in building up a poem for himself out of his responses to the text" (*Reader* 10).<sup>210</sup> Echoes may occur within

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<sup>209</sup> Rosenblatt contrasts this type of reading with the other one: nonaesthetic reading. She states, "'In nonaesthetic reading, the reader's attention is focused primarily on what will remain as the residue after the reading ...[24mid]/ To designate this type of reading, in which the primary concern of the reader is with what he will carry away from the reading, I have chosen the term 'efferent,' 'to carry away.'" (Rosenblatt, *Reader* 23-4)

<sup>210</sup> In fact, Rosenblatt acquired this observation from observing how her students had arrived at an interpretation of the passages she handed them in the twenty-five years of her teaching career up to then. The method is as follows: "A group of men and women, graduate students in English, were handed a text. They were told that they were to remain anonymous, and that they should start writing



the constituents of the work assimilated during reading, or patterns may emerge.

Köhler offers a picture of how this may happen when he describes the process of creating new relations to remember unrelated images:

Let somebody read a few times the following pairs of nouns: lake—sugar, boot—plate, girl—kangaroo, pencil—gasoline, palace—bicycle, railroad—elephant, book—toothpaste. ...[157] When I read those words I can imagine, as a series of strange pictures, how a lump of sugar dissolves in a lake, how a boot rests on a plate, how a girl feeds a kangaroo, and so forth. If this happens during the reading of the series, I experience in imagination a number of well-organized, though quite unusual, wholes. (Köhler, *Gestalt* 156-57)

“There is one psychological fact that plays a central role in productive thinking. This fact is a subject’s awareness of *relations*” (Köhler, *Task* 142). Just as “particular relations emerge only when our attention has the right direction of their appearance” (Köhler, *Task* 143), a reader may see a certain aesthetic effect of a poem when he/she see right relations among the constituents of a poem in a certain right way.<sup>211</sup> Like John Hospers’s specific characterization of aesthetic experience, “The experience

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as soon as possible after beginning to read. They were not asked to introspect *about* what they were doing, but simply to jot down whatever came to them” (*Rosenblatt*, Reading 6). The result shows a great variety of approaches and reactions among different readers, which is already a sign that the text is not the sole controller of the activity and the contribution from the reader plays an crucial part in any intpreptation.

<sup>211</sup> What Köhler focuses on here is the process of how people solve problem. He argues, “we have to recognize that probably all problems with which we may be confronted, and also the solutions of such problems, are matters of relations” (Köhler, *Task* 143). Although reading a poem for its aesthetic effect to emerge may not be exactly like the situation of problem-solving. It can be argue that when a reader wonders, on first contacts, how all of the messages he/she reads in the poem may come together aesthetically valid, the challenge posed by the poem and the curiosity rising in side the reader’s mind may trigger similar mental status as that of problem solving.

*hangs together*, is coherent, to an unusually high degree” (Hospers, *Understanding the Arts* 358).

When there are patterns already apparent or expected in the poem, such as those of an established genre, different ones that overlap or disrupt those set patterns may emerge for individual readers. Through reading, out of situations varying from an immediate epiphany to an exhausting exploration, a distinct and self-sustained aesthetic experience may occur— i.e., the beauty of the work is seen.

In addition, there is more to what Rosenblatt points out in the relationship between a reader and “that particular text” he/she is reading. The reading happens to the text in the reader’s mind as well as to the physical text before him/her. Even before the first reading ends, the mind may start re-reading what has been read. The association among the constituents of the work read and the appreciative mechanism of reading have already started functioning. Under the cataclysm of a reader’s aesthetic faculty, the processed and re-processed result is not a lifeless printed page, but assumes the fluid existence of organically associative potentiality, in a way, like those daily objects that reappear in Alice’s wonderland. The reader is responsible at least for two aspects of this metamorphosis: his/her innate aesthetic faculty that produces an holistic body of associative potentiality and his/her choice of appreciative approaches/reading therein. “That is why those who seek in the texts



alone the elements that differentiate between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic arrive at only partial or arbitrary answers," as Rosenblatt points out (*Reader* 23). Michael Riffaterre also advances, "*The literary phenomenon is not only the text, but also its reader and all of the reader's possible reactions to the text*"<sup>212</sup>—both *énoncé* and *énonciation*" (*Text Production* 3). Rosenblatt also sheds light on how readers can be involved, "The reader brings to the text his past experience and present personality. Under the magnetism of the ordered symbols of the text, he marshals his resources and crystallizes out from the stuff of memory, thought, and feeling a new order, a new experience, which he sees as the poem" (*Reader* 12).

The mechanism that leads individual readers to see different significance in a poem is in fact also innate in the text itself. As Riffaterre points out, while he provides a system for explicating two stages of poetry readings:

If we are to understand the semiotics of poetry, we must carefully distinguish *two levels or stages of reading*, ... [5] This first, *heuristic reading* is also where the first interpretation takes place, since it is during this reading that meaning is apprehended. ... The second stage is that of *retroactive reading*. ... [6] He is in effect performing a structural decoding: as he moves through the text he comes to recognize, by dint of comparisons or simply because he is now able to put them together, that successive and differing statements, first noticed as mere ungrammaticalities, are in fact equivalent, for they now appear as variants of the same structural matrix. The text is in effect a variation or modulation of one structure—thematic, symbolic, or whatever—and this sustained relation to one structure constitutes the

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<sup>212</sup> The italicization is Riffaterre's.



significance. ...This is why, whereas units of meaning may be words or phrases, or sentences, *the unit of significance is the text*.

(*Semiotics* 4-6)

Riffaterre points out that readers should work on text as the unit of significance, but his theory needs modification in several aspects.

To start with, the activity cannot be divided distinctly into two stages. Even when one may consciously read a poem the first time for heuristic purposes, the read part will affect how the rest may be read. That is to say, one is already reading retroactively in the first reading. For example, metric and rhythmic patterns can dawn on a reader before he/she reaches the very end of the poem because he/she may start organizing, i.e. re-reading, what is being read. In addition, Riffaterre hints that there is fixed significance hidden in a poem that is supposed to be the same for all readers when he states, "Decoding the poem starts with a first reading stage that goes on from beginning to end of the text, from top to bottom of the page, and follows the syntagmatic unfolding" (*Semiotics* 4-5). While one reader may be different from another, it seems that the text is a fixed factor to any reader. "*The text is a limiting and prescriptive code*," as Riffaterre claims, "... We must, therefore, assume that the literary text is constructed in such a way that it can control its own decoding" (*Text Production*, 6). It is this fixedness that ensues the impression of limit in a text. Furthermore, "decoding," implies that there is a fixed message beneath the code to be

discovered. And by saying the code is “limiting,” he hints at the non-validity of any interpretation that tampers with this limit, whatever it may be. Reading may look like a process of decoding because a reader’s interpretation starts from understanding the text, expanding from that ground zero. But this does not overrule the contribution of a reader’s aesthetic faculty, which is involved in the whole process. T. S. Eliot, for example, comments on whether there can be a fixed meaning in a poem, “The first danger is that of assuming that there must be just one interpretation of the poem as a whole, that must be right. ... But as for the meaning of the poem as a whole, it is not exhausted by any explanation, for the meaning is what the poem means to different sensitive readers” (Eliot, *On Poetry* 113). So instead of saying that the text of a poem, which is physically fixed, contains a code that may be decoded in a fixed number of ways, it would be more accurate to say that the text, though physically fixed, is a catalyst that can produce different chemistry when encountering different aesthetic faculties of individual readers.

## The Contextual Relation

I. A. Richards states, “no word can be judged as to whether it is good or bad, correct or incorrect, beautiful or ugly, or anything else that matters to a writer, in isolation” (Richards, *Philosophy* 51). Michael Dufrenne expresses this concept in a

stricter tone, "One and the same stroke of the pen can possess very different expressions, depending on the context, and thus no single stroke is expressive by itself" (Dufrenne, 328). In poetry reading, it is when one part of the text read in context with another part or parts that any significant characteristics can begin to emerge. I. A. Richards holds:

The mutual dependence of word varies evidently with the type of discourse. At one end of the scale, in the strict exposition of some highly criticized and settled science through technicalized and rigid speech, a large proportion of them are independent. ... The other end of the scale is in poetry... We know very much less about the behaviour of words in these cases—when their virtue is to have no fixed and settled meaning separable from those of the other words they occur with. There are many more possibilities here than the theory of language has yet tried to think out. Often the whole utterance in which the co-operating meanings of the component words hang on one another is not itself stable in meaning. It utters not one meaning but a movement among meanings.

(Richards, *Philosophy* 48)

Dealing with this fluidity, Richards suggests, "The remedy is not to resist these shifts but to learn to follow them" (Richards, *Philosophy* 73). In fact, it can be argued further that besides learning to follow them, one can learn to master and apply them with our aesthetic faculty.

The constituents of a poem in a contextual relation may be next to each other or wide apart in the text. The contextual relation they form may contain units as



slight as punctuation marks or as substantial as the whole work. They may also be the aesthetic significance that emerges from other contextual relations in that reading. The thesis expands the contextualizing compass to include the contexts exterior to the text that can bring forth distinct significance. These may be the taste, knowledge and faculty of the reader as well as those from the cultural context or intertextuality of the poem. The simple fact is that a person builds his/her reading faculty on former readings, and, from this point of view only, one cannot read in a vacuum. There are always other texts involved, no matter how remotely and, therefore, it is clear that aesthetic significance cannot happen in a vacuum either.

Any factor that enters and re-enters the process of reading from the text and the reader may influence how and what the reader sees in the work. When a contextual relation displays aesthetic significance or the reader discerns distinct, however subtle, aesthetic significance there, the contextual relation becomes aesthetically significant. Among these constituents, it will also be described as aesthetically valid and these constituents described as aesthetically contextualized.

Therefore, the text of a poem may be fixed, but the contextual relation of which the text is potential is not. How and what a contextual relation signifies may vary with individual readers, even with individual reading. Furthermore, the statement that there is no fixed meaning in the text of a poem does not mean that the

text of a poem contains infinitive semantic possibilities but that there may be a vast range of subtle nuances in what the text can signify as a unit which generates even wider and more various range of individual aesthetic significance through individual interpretation. This “subtlety with its suppleness” (Richards, *Philosophy* 73) is not only the very source of communicating power of a language, as I. A. Richards believes,<sup>213</sup> but also crucial to poetry appreciation. This is why the true meaning of a poem, as this thesis proposes, starts from the aesthetic significance that the poem is potential of instead of the semantic significance that the text of the poem should have.

W. B. Yeats attacks the issue from another angle, “[a poem] must have the perfections that escape analysis, the subtleties that have a new meaning every day, and it must [256] have all this whether it be but a little song made out of a moment of dreamy indolence, or some great epic made out of the dreams of one poet and of a hundred generations whose hands were never weary of the sword” (*Ideas* 255-56). From the view point of this thesis, this elusive “perfection” and evergreen “subtleties” originate from the potentiality in the contextual relations that allow different readers to interpret poems differently.

The following section will exemplify what a contextual relation may be and

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<sup>213</sup> “Without these shifts such mutual understanding as we achieve would fail even within the narrowed resultant scope. Language, losing its subtlety with its suppleness, would lose also its power to serve us.” (Richards, *Philosophy* 73)

how it may happen with both English and Chinese samples. Only examples of one language or the other will be produced. The reason is that since it will be shown here that the contextual relation is one of the common qualities that both English and Chinese poetry shares, it would be redundant to demonstrate the same thing twice on every occasion. *Shakespeare's Sonnets* and the *qiyan lüshi*<sup>214</sup> sequence "*Qiu Xin Ba Shou*"<sup>215</sup> ("Eight Regulated Verses: Autumn Meditation") of Du Fu (712-770) are adopted as the objects for demonstration.

Though an aesthetically valid contextual relation can be simply a new interpretation from reading an established structure, such as the concluding couplet of Shakespeare's sonnets, it can also be a more sophisticated process. Sometimes what becomes apparent at first may be particular phenomena, , during reading, new significance then becomes apparent. An example of this can be found in reading the couplets of Shakespeare's sonnets. His use of couplets has been criticized as lame and redundant.<sup>216</sup> W. H. Auden, for example, complains, "[A]ll too often, even in some of the best, the couplet lines are the weakest and dullest in the sonnet, and, coming where they do at the end, the reader has the sense of a disappointing

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<sup>214</sup> *Qiyān*, seven-character, and *lǚshī*, regulated verse.

<sup>215</sup> I.e. 秋興八首. *Qiu xin* literally means "inspired by autumn."

<sup>216</sup> This of course cannot apply to all couplets. A considerable proportion of them are ironic reversals and bring unexpected climax at the end, such as the couple of sonnet 130. However, as there are also a significant number of them that are not so, as the following note shows. Vendler tries to justify the aesthetic value of the couplet by finding a function shared by all of the couplets that surpasses this ironic reversal vs. non ironic reversal binary.



anticlimax" (Auden in Burto, *The Sonnets* xlv). This may happen when the couplet is read in the contextual relation between the main body, the three quatrains, and the coda, the couplet. One may find that the couplet sometimes paraphrases what the main body has said or concludes the main body with a proverbial statement.<sup>217</sup>

Helen Vendler adopts a more sophisticated approach in examining the function of the couplets in Shakespeare's sonnets. Before dealing with what the couplet may contribute to a reading, Vendler explores the aesthetic potentiality in a phenomenon present nearly in all of the couplets in the *Sonnets*, and then adopts it as a party in the contextual relation to see if there is any aesthetic significance. This complication proves rewarding, as shown later.

The phenomenon in question is that there are almost always some words, excluding articles, that appear both in the main body and the coda. These words are

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<sup>217</sup> Just to offer a few examples here. In sonnet 148, the couplet, "O cunning love, with tears thou keep'st me blind,/ Lest eyes well seeing thy foul faults should find," is an explanation to what the main body states, i.e. why the poet has no judgement in love, and line 12, "the sun itself sees not, till heaven clear," has already put it arguably more powerfully. In Sonnet 94, the couplet, "For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;/ Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds," is repeating what line 11-12 has already been described in more details, "But if that flower with base infection meet,/ The basest weed outbraves his dignity...". In Sonnet 37, the couplet, "Look what is best, that best I wish in thee;/ This wish I have then ten times happy me," expresses the same emotion as the main body and is nothing like a reversal. In Sonnet 29, the couplet, "For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings/ That then I scorn to change my state with kings" is rephrasing with different comparison the emotion already stated in lines 10-14, "Haply I think on thee, and then my state,/ Like to the lark at break of day arising,/ From sullen earth sings hymns at heaven's gate...". In sonnet 18, the couplet, "So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,/ So long lives this, and this gives life to thee," is semantically repeat the third quatrain, "But thy eternal summer shall not fade,/ Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;/ Nor shall Death brag thou wader'st in his shade,/ When in eternal lines to time thou growest...". Even in Sonnet 1, the ideas of the second line of the couplet, "To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee," including the implication of greed and the image of death, have been stated in an more elaborated way in the third quatrain, "Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,/ And only herald to the gaudy spring,/ Within thine own bud buriest thy content,/ And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding." And, some of the couplets are reversals but not ironic. The couplet of sonnet 73 is one of them. It is a reversal of emotion but not ironic. For all of the texts of the *Sonnets* mentioned above, the thesis adopts the edition of Duncan-Jones.

termed as “Couplet Tie.” It turns out that they are almost always words about the key idea or theme of the sonnet.<sup>218</sup> It is through this mechanism that the lines of the couplet become highly potential in carrying aesthetic significance when they form a contextual relation indirectly with other parts of the sonnet. Vendler points out that, “Shakespeare clearly depended on this device not only to point up the thematic intensities of a sonnet, but also to show how the same words take on different emotional import as the poem progress” (*Art* 28). This becomes one of the main tools with which she demonstrates the aesthetic significance of the unique interpretive nuances she sees in the *Sonnets*.

Another example is the character for springtime, *chun*, in the fifth line of the eighth poem of “*Qiu Xin*,” as presented below:<sup>219</sup>

*kun      wu      yu      su      zi      wei      yi*

<sup>218</sup> Please see Vendler, *Art* 25-28.

<sup>219</sup> The Chinese text with the literal translation of each line is given below:

昆吾御宿自逶迤	Kun Wu and Yu Su still make up a endless scenic view	
紫閣峰陰入漢陂	And the shadow of the Purple Pavilion Peak reaches as far as Mei Puo.	2
香稻啄餘鸚鵡粒	Fragrant rice, parrots fed and fed but there were still more;	
碧梧棲老鳳凰枝	Green parasol tree, phoenixes could always found vacant old branch to perch upon;	4
佳人拾翠春相問	Ladies collected kingfisher's feather in springtime as gifts;	
仙侶同舟晚更移	Immortal companions on boat carried on the enjoyment by sailing to another spot, disregarding the time was getting late.	6
彩筆昔遊干氣象	When I last visited here, my colourful brush could compete with the Nature;	
白首今望苦低垂	Now, I can only droop my white head and sigh.	8



location name		title of a royal garden self			spreading on and on		
<i>zi</i>	<i>ge</i>	<i>feng</i>	<i>yin</i>	<i>ru</i>	<i>mei</i>	<i>puo</i> <sup>220</sup>	2
purple	pavilion	peak	shadow	enter	the river Meipuo		
<i>xiang</i>	<i>dao</i>	<i>zhuo</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>ying</i>	<i>wu</i>	<i>li</i>	
fragrant	rice	peck	abundant		parrot	grain	
<i>bi</i>	<i>wu</i>	<i>qi</i>	<i>lao</i>	<i>feng</i>	<i>huang</i>	<i>zhi</i>	4
green	Chinese	rest	old	pheonix		bough	
	parasol						
	tree						
<i>jia</i>	<i>ren</i>	<i>shi</i>	<i>cui</i>	<i>chun</i>	<i>xiang</i>	<i>wen</i>	5
beautiful	people	collect	kingfisher'	spring	to each	to greet	
			s feather		other		
<i>xian</i>	<i>lū</i>	<i>tong</i>	<i>zhou</i>	<i>wan</i>	<i>geng</i>	<i>yi</i>	6
immortal	compani	together	boat	evening	further	move	
	ons						
<i>cai</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>xi</i>	<i>ceng</i>	<i>gan</i>	<i>qi</i>	<i>xiang</i>	8
colourful	brush	the past	once	interfere	the universe		
<i>bai</i>	<i>shou</i>	<i>jin</i>	<i>wan</i>	<i>ku</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>chui</i>	8
white	head	now	view	sad	low	droop	

Jin Shengtan<sup>221</sup> (1608-1661) agreed this line was an effective variation to express

*qiu*, "autumn" (in Ye Jiaying p. 431)<sup>222</sup> the topic image of the series. In fact, most of

<sup>220</sup> "Kun wu," "yu su," "Purple Pavilion Peak" and the river Meipuo are all famous sites once encompassed inside the Shanglin Garden, a royal gardens established by the Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC). See Ye Jiaying 491-504.

<sup>221</sup> I.e. 金聖嘆.

<sup>222</sup> Jin is one of the few critics that investigated the aesthetic value of *chun*. Even so, no much result is produced. For the rest who included the character in their criticism, it was mentioned only as a temporal epithet to the feather collecting activity, not for the import the season spring may bring into the appreciation of the poem. See Ye Jiaying *Du Fu* 427-35.



the early critics pay most of their attention to its possible allusion to the feather collecting to the highly praised "*Luo Shen Fu*" (Ode to the Goddess Luo), a verse narrative by Cao Zhi, one of the greatest poets before Du.<sup>223</sup> But this character is more aesthetically potential than this. In fact, this character can produce different aesthetic significances when read in different contextual relations as in the line, the couplet, the middle two couplets of the poem and the whole poem. Part of the true aesthetic potentiality of this single character *chun* is at least what resonates among the aesthetic significances from these contextual relations.

Read within the line, its semantic association of the season spring enhances the juvenility in the ambiance and hints at a floral scene. Read within the couplet, with the character *wan*, literally "the evening," i.e. the coda of a day, at its corresponding position, an impending end seems to loom over the good days of springtime, which may echo the contemporary situation of the dynasty. Read within the middle two parallel couplets<sup>224</sup> containing the reality-mythology parallelism between the first and the second lines of each couplet, i.e.

Parrot (a creature in the real world) vs. phoenix (a mythological creature) (second couplet)  
Beautiful maidens (realistic) vs. Immortals on boat (mythological) (third couplet),

<sup>223</sup> See Ye Jiaying *Du Fu* 427-35.

<sup>224</sup> In convention, the middle two couplets in a regulated verse is supposed to be in accurate parallelism. This formal connection lends legitimacy to view the four lines in a set contextual relation, though it is not seen as a unit.

it endows the parallelism with a temporal dimension. The parrot vs. phoenix contextual relation in the first couplet of the two resonates with the parallelism between *chun* (spring) and *wan* (evening) since a year in mundane world is approximately equivalent to a day in heaven in Chinese mythology.<sup>225</sup> Another subtle hint is at the transience of the worldly glory of the Empire right before the closing couplet of the whole series. Read within the poem, it suggests nostalgia for past peace and prosperity of the dynasty with simple pastimes and elegance<sup>226</sup> by a paradoxical contextual relation. Up to the line in question, there has been the grandeur of the scenic panorama around the Capital of the Empire in the first couplet, signified by several representative locations in parataxis, and the ambience of extreme opulence and splendor generated by the sophisticated arrangement of imageries of good harvest ("fragrant rice" and "abundant"), wealth ("parrot"), peace ("parasol tree" and the habitation of phoenix) and royal glory ("phoenix") in the second couplet.<sup>227</sup> The momentum up to this point runs head on into the minimalism

<sup>225</sup> One of the most famous examples are the story of Ruan Zhao and Liu Chen who wander into fairy land by chance. After staying there for half a (immortal's) year, they return to the world only to find that ten generations have passed during their absence (Li Fang, 1043-310). Passages reflecting similar temporal concepts can be found in *Xi You Ji* (Journey to the West) where demons and monsters that devastate for a certain number of years in the human world turn out to be escapees from the heaven for the same numbers of days up there.

<sup>226</sup> *Xian*, besides meaning "immortal," can also be an epithet for superior elegance. Therefore, *xian lu* can be a euphemism for literati and aristocrats here.

<sup>227</sup> There has been much discussion about the reversion in syntax, placing the objects (rice, parasol tree) before the subject (parrot, phoenix). In a sense, this order highlights the connotation of the two plants: good harvest and peace. It also entails an highly aesthetically potential ambiguity that the subject (parrot and phoenix) become also the epithet to the unit of the objects (grain and parasol tree),



of the activity of feather collecting for fun in springtime in the fifth line. As each is dramatically offset by the other, any aesthetic significance in this contextual relation, nostalgia for example, is powerfully energized by the contrast.

Another possible element comes from the other works by the same author, especially when they were meant to form a larger aesthetic entity, as in a poem series, for example. The last two of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, sonnets 153 and 154, may seem to be bad choices because of their meager aesthetic significance as Auden points out, "Any writer with an audience in mind knows that a sequence of poems must climax with one of the best. Yet the sequence as we have it concludes with two of the worst of the sonnets, trivial conceits about, apparently, going to Bath to take the waters" (Auden in Burto, *The Sonnets xliii*). Their functionality in the series gives the appearance of weakness but it becomes another story when one reads them in their context in the 1609 edition, where the sonnet series was paired with a long poem, "A Lover's Complaint" (Kerrigan 7). Vendler sees one possible reason for this phenomenon when they are viewed in contextual relation, i.e. a mutual complementarity between the sonnet series and the long poem, "Yet the very triviality and ancientness of these little myths—and the comic and frivolous tone with which they treat the whole question of passion—cool down the *deep oaths* of

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i.e. "grain" and "bough." So every grain of the fragrant rice is that of parrot grain and every bough of the green parasol tree is a phoenix bough. See also Ye Jiaying 414-27.



the rhetorically fevered lyric poems" (*Art* 649).

Similarly, what follows *chun* also bring a new dimension to its aesthetic potentiality. Read in contextual relation with the whole series, the character may suggest to the reader a purposeful irony since the series is supposed to focus on imagery of autumn. The reminiscence of its opposite season immediately offsets the quality of emotion accumulating up to this point like adding a lively green dot to a melancholy gray surface to further intensify the emotional saturation of the latter. This climax, more importantly, also owes part of its aesthetic energy to its contextual relation with the very last couplet of the series, i.e. the double coda of the poem and the series. The adjacency with the lingering diminuendo of the coda couplet, "In old days, my colourful brush could once recreate the Universe; but re-visiting today as a white-headed old man, I can only droop my head in sadness",<sup>228</sup> help sustain the effect, lengthening its ironic influence.

The compass of contextualization can be wider yet. The historical background is also significant. For example, though trying to pinpoint the identity of the young male to whom Shakespeare dedicated the first four fifths of the sonnets,

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<sup>228</sup> The Chinese text is 彩筆昔曾干氣象白首今望苦低垂. A few critics, including Ye Jiaying, hold that the third character should be *jin* 今 rather than *yin* 吟, the characters of which are only different by one radical 口 (literal, the mouth) in the latter. With the latter, which means "chanting," the second line of the couplet would mean "Chanting and looking into the scenery as a white-headed old man, I can only droop my head in sadness." Ye rightly pointed out that "chanting" is rather irrelevant here and since the two characters look similar, it could be a miss copying. See Ye Jiaying *Du Fu* pp 442-43 & 447-49. The thesis agrees with Ye, however, with a different argument that "chanting" cannot form a contextual relation with its context as aesthetically valid as "today" can here.

may be a pointless action of "idle curiosity" as Auden comments (Burto, *The Sonnets xxxviii*), it may be a valid approach of for a reader if we assume that these are poems dedicated to a same-sex lover. Gender is as much an issue in one reading as the other. Bringing up the possibility of reading the sonnets with this background, as this thesis emphasizes, is different from trying to prove anything historically. Even Auden admits, "In the case of a man of action, we can distinguish in a rough and ready way between his private personal life and his public life, but both are lives of action and, therefore, capable of affecting each other" (Burto, *The Sonnets xxxviii*). While composing poetry by itself may be only arguably an action, dedicating a sonnet series accompanied by a long narrative poem to a patron is definitely one. If that is the case, the issue of inclination can be a legitimate candidate as a party in a contextual relation.<sup>229</sup>

With the *chun* in "*Qiu Xin*," the historical background of the series and the cultural background of Chinese poetry can form valid contextual relations too. To try to pinpoint a certain line as reporting factually a certain historical incident will be a futile effort.<sup>230</sup> However, it is another story to read it against the knowledge that the

<sup>229</sup> It can become an unavoidable issue for linguistic and cultural factors. In a language where gender is expressed explicitly, the translator will need to make a choice between a masculine "you" or a feminine one when rendering the dedicatee in the first one hundred and twenty six sonnets. The first Hebrew translation of Shakespeare's sonnets, appearing as late as 1916, rendered the dedicatee of the poetry female due to the negative attitude this culture holds towards this inclination. See Toury, *Descriptive* 114-28. In Chinese translation, the issue can be evaded before the cultural factor even comes into the picture, for this language does not distinguish the gender in this pronoun, 你.

<sup>230</sup> For example, the identity of *xian lu* (literally, immortal companions) has been an unsolved riddle among critics (see Ye Jiaying *Du Fu*) as the identity of the noble young man *Sonnets* was dedicated



once towering Tang dynasty was falling apart at the time and the fact that the poetry of Du Fu has been praised as “history in poetry.”<sup>231</sup> *Chun* near the end of the series can be viewed in a contextual relation with *qiu* in the title and echo the title of *Chun Qiu* by Confucius, arguably the most important figure in Chinese culture. Confucius is famous for his subtle but severely accurate criticism in the book. Mencius pointed out that when Confucius finished *Chun Qiu* all of the traitors and disloyal officials under the sky were horrified for they were afraid that their foul deeds would be exposed.<sup>232</sup> In “*Qiu Xin*,” there are apparent but subtle historical criticisms, as many critics point out.<sup>233</sup> The contextual relation of the *chun-qiu* with the reputation of Du Fu’s poetic achievement as “history in poetry” adds new light to its interpretation.

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<sup>231</sup> One of the first origin of this reputation is the third chapter of *Ben Shi Shi* 本事詩 by Meng Qi 孟棻 (ca late ninth century) where there is the remark, “What Du suffered and experienced when he exiled between the provinces of Long and Shu during the rebellion of An Lushan had been stated in his poetry, revealing the most obscure and smallest incidents. For this, his poetry deserves the title, History in Poetry” (Meng Qi 3535). This remark was generally supported by the critics of the Song dynasty. However, there have been disagreement. Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488-1559) of the Ming dynasty strongly objected this notion. Yang thought the term unduly exaggerated the historical element in the poems. He argued that even if historical facts were present in them the poems could not replace the histories. This remark is now treated more as a praise of Du Fu’s poetic achievement than a definition of his poetic art.

<sup>232</sup> I.e. “世衰道微邪說暴行有作臣弑其君者有之子弑其父者有之孔子懼作春秋春秋天子之事也是故孔子曰知我者其惟春秋乎罪我者其惟春秋乎...[118] 孔子成春秋而亂臣賊子懼...” (Ruan, 117-18).

<sup>233</sup> The allusion to the Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty, just to mention one example, in two lines of poem five 承露金莖霄漢間/西望瑤池降王母, two lines of poem seven 昆明池水漢時功/武帝旌旗在眼中, another two of poem eight 昆吾御宿自逶迤/紫閣峰陰入漢陂, provides a ground for such criticism. Since the emperor Xuan Zhong, the one whose corruption in his latter reign was the main cause of the turmoil, shares several defects with Emperor Wu, such as craving for the expansion the empire and military success, extravagant lifestyle, and superstitious wish for eternal life, these allusions were treated as subtle criticism of the Emperor Xuan Zhong’s deeds. (See chapters on poems five, seven and eight, in Ye Jiaying *Du Fu*, pp 275-300 and pp 353-449). The two emperors are similar in their political life, both ruled China for about half a century (Wu for fifty four years and Xuan Zhong for forty four) and became fatuous and self-indulgent toward their later days on throne.



The series may be an aesthetically legitimate micro *Chun Qiu* of the first half of the Tang dynasty.

Even a part as semantically peripheral to a poem as its enumeration can be read in a contextual relation with constituents in the text and have significance. Since Shakespeare's sonnets were first published, there has been argument whether there is any order for them or not. Katherine Duncan-Jones concludes, "there is indeed some principle of overall arrangement at work, though scholars are divided on its nature and significance" (*Sonnets* 98). In fact, one can modify this remark by pointing out that there are apparently several principles concerning different topics working at the same time. For example, there are at least two rules how Shakespeare plays with number: using significant serial number and assigning significant number of sonnets to group sonnets under the same topic or theme. The following are examples of the former rule. Some serial numbers are obviously temporally significant. To name a few, Sonnet 12 starts with "When I do count the clock that tells the time, ..." and Sonnet 60 contains "So do our minutes hasten to their end, ..." The following are two examples for the latter rule. The opening sonnet group that persuades the young male persona in the first one hundred and twenty-six sonnets may seem to end at a number physiologically significant, eighteen, the number of the year of adulthood at

the time. The number of sonnets grouped for the Dark Lady also ends in a physiologically significant number, twenty-eight, the number of days in a menstrual cycle.<sup>234</sup>

When only one of them exists, it can be argued as coincidence. However, when there are at least as many as spotted here present, it can be argued that the two rules must be observed with certain implication of physiological significance and resonate significantly with each other. While this is open to interpretation beyond the scope of this thesis, the thesis holds that the contextual relation formed by these phenomena, only to name a few above, becomes the basis to argue why Sonnet 99 can be trespassing the limit of line number of the genre significantly. Without this contextual relation, one would be quite ready to agree with Auden, who believes this sonnet is one line too long for no other reason than that of being "a first draft" (Auden in Burto, *The Sonnets xliii*). Even when one commonly shared principle is yet to be found, it is apparent that Shakespeare is number-conscious, as shown above. With this in context, the longest sonnet in the collection is assigned the largest bi-digital number can start to be validly potential of certain significance.

In Du Fu's case, the number of the poems in this series, alluding to the number of *ba gua*, i.e. the Eight Triagrams, can be aesthetically important because it

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<sup>234</sup> For playing on this number, see also Duncan-Jones 49.

adds a philosophical dimension, which makes it uniquely Du Fu's. *Ba gua*<sup>235</sup> represents the physical components of the universe, which all evolve from different combinations of Yin and Yang.<sup>236</sup> The series, then, is an embodiment, if remotely, of the law of the cycle of Yin and Yang: when one quality is reigning at its height and expressing itself to the fullest, it is also the time when the opposite quality starts to germinate. So is the relationship between adversity and fortune, as the diagram *pi ji tai lai* (literally and in this order, "adversity, extreme, fortune, come") shows.<sup>237</sup> *Chun* may signify *tai* (fortune), while autumn *pi* (adversity). With the preceding seven eighths of the series developing upon and elaborating the image of autumn, pushing the limit of the image, one can only further it, paradoxically, by replacing it with its opposite, the image of spring. On the other hand, with this contextual relation between *chun* and the number of the poems in the series, the whole series may assume a nuance of irony. The imagery of the series though assuming the *pi* to *tai* section of cycle, if the last couplet is viewed as a coda, is in fact presenting a China that has gone way past the *tai* part of the cycle and sunk deep in the midnight of *pi*, where the sign of reversion should be dawning. This keynote of irony offers a

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<sup>235</sup> I.e. 八卦.

<sup>236</sup> "At the very beginning, from nothingness came Tai Ji. Then from it the Two Elements (*liang yi*) originates, i.e. Yin and Yang. Then the two evolved into Four Phenomena (*si xiang*), Grand Yang, Grand Yin, Minor Yang, Minor Yin. From them, the Eight Triagrams came forth, including the sky (*qian*), the earth (*kun*), the thunder (*zhen*), the wind (*xuan*), the water (*kan*), the fire (*li*), the mountain (*gen*) and the marsh (*tui*)" (Guo Jianxun 522).

<sup>237</sup> The Chinese of the diagram, *pji tailai* 否極泰來, literally "when adversity becomes extreme, the fortune will come." A brief description of the diagram.



potential to form a contextual relation with several parts in the series that can be aesthetically valid.

## Where Readers Come In

“[In] the case of direct experience two people always have two facts in two separate experiences” (Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology* 12). Even if they are physically experiencing the same things in the same situation. As Köhler argues, “One person may always report ‘red’ where [13] another person also says ‘red’. Still we know only that the first person has throughout a constant quality wherever and whenever the second person talks about red. We do not know that the first person has the same quality as is called red by the second person” (Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology* 12-3). “One person cannot observe another person’s experience,” Köhler concludes (Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology* 23). As a koan of the Chan Buddhism puts it in a metaphor, “the temperature of the water is in the mind of the drinker.”<sup>238</sup>

When it comes to reading a poem, the reader him/herself, one of the two ubiquitous elements<sup>239</sup> in this activity, is a variable. The possible combinations of different contextual relations in a poem can be as kaleidoscopic as how many times it is read since it is the reader who decides whether and how what he/she sees looks

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<sup>238</sup> I.e. 如人飲水冷暖自知. See Shi Daoyuan 72 of Scroll 1-10.

<sup>239</sup> The other is, the thesis argues, the historical context the reading takes place.

aesthetically significant or not. When aesthetic significance happens in reading, it can be either that a distinct significance in the text betrays to the reader an aesthetically valid contextual relation or that the reader selects consciously a set of constituents from the text to form a contextual relation to see if it manifests an originally dormant significance.

It is arguable where the credit of this aesthetic significance should go, to the poem or the reader. As a reader's background may affect how he/she reads and what attracts his/her attention, the two parties are more than often in a relationship of reciprocal causation. As Robert Ginsberg puts it in another way, "Experiencing aesthetically is both an apprehending and an evaluating. To recognize the vigorous formal activity of the pattern is to appreciate it while seeing it, and seeing it is thanks to appreciating it" (in *Mitias Possibility* 64). Since how the reader reads the text decides what contextual relations emerge in a poem, the aesthetic faculty of the reader, which enables him/her to see these relations, is as important as the aesthetic significance of the poem. It is a wrong presumption that all of the credit of any valid interpretation of a poem should go to the poet for his/her effort either conscious or unconscious, a presumption Eliot describes as "the second danger" of a poetry reader (Eliot *On Poetry*, 113-14).

There are two extremities in the spectrum of the involvement of reader's

faculty in seeing aesthetic significance in any contextual relation. One is the spontaneous end. It is similar to what Ginsberg experienced on the platform of the suburban line of the principal rail station in Philadelphia. Waiting for the train, Ginsberg accidentally laid eyes on a cracked pane of glass and saw beauty in the patterns of the cracks (Ginsberg, in *Mitias Possibility* 61). Ginsberg emphasizes, "At the train station I was not deliberately engaged in an aesthetic search, what happened was not in an aesthetic context, and the object of my discovery, though aesthetic, was not intentionally so as a work of art. The discovery, then, in this case must be appreciated as a process of discovering, of disclosing and uncovering, in the course of which the subject participates in the aesthetic" (Ginsberg, in *Mitias Possibility* 64).

The other is the purposive and systematic end. The reader designs and constructs according to personal expertise and the nature of the object work an appreciative system with specific criteria to excavate the aesthetic significance in a poem. The involvement of the reader's aesthetic faculty here is explicit. Robert Bly and Clive Scott are two examples, who adopt very different approaches. Bly in his *Eight Stages of Translation, with a selection of poems and translation* places almost one-sided emphasis on the auditory factors as the criteria for his translation. Among the eight steps, there is not much attention spent on imagery. Except for the first three steps that focus on the transfer of semantic and rhetorical elements and the last on revision,



the four steps that form the main body of his methodology is about if the translation sounds like authentic American English.<sup>240</sup> On the other hand, Scott, in his system designed for translating Charles Baudelaire, places a dominant emphasis on promoting the replacement of form of the SP by free verse. The reasons are, as Scott argues, "... most particularly because free verse's non-metricity operates as a plurality of metrical intimations, because free verse is an *inclusive* verse-form in which regularities of various kinds can survive, because, in free verse, metricity is restored to rhythmicity and the rhythmic fabric thus becomes available to an input from both translator and reader, ..." (Scott 35). However, the two extremes can be in fact closely related. One might start to develop appreciative system out of the experience of epiphany of beauty or unexpected observation in any systematic examination.

From the observations of Eliot and Ginsberg, it is clear that the aesthetic significance of a poem or an object is a result of the chemistry between the aesthetic faculty of the reader/viewer and the work of art itself, no matter whether the act of discovery is conscious or not and no matter whether any aesthetic significance in a work of art, including poetry, is consciously endowed by the creator or not. Ginsberg comments on his experience on the station platform: "This kind of occurrence is

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<sup>240</sup> See Bly, Robert. *Eight Stages of Translation, with a selection of poems and translations*. Boston: Boston Tree Press, 1983.

possible only if we acknowledge that I was secretly seeking the aesthetic. Unknown to myself I directed my steps and turned my head in a quest for the aesthetic. This we do daily." (Ginsberg, in *Mitias Possibility* 61).

For a reader of poetry, who reads with purposes varying from academic criticism to casual pleasure, it can be argued that the involvement of consciousness to ignite such chemistry and resonance may range from systemized maneuver to complete non-expectation. However, a poetry translator, who reads in order to recreate the beauty of the SP, may look for aesthetic significance or quality more actively or even aggressively in such chemistry and resonance. Rosenblatt simply states, "'Poem' presupposes a reader actively involved with a text and refers to what he makes of his responses to the particular set of verbal symbols" (Rosenblatt, *Reader* 12). Of course, the two ends of this scale do not exclude each other. One can consciously search for aesthetic significance with an appreciative system while encountering unexpected aesthetic significance spontaneously on the way. In fact, the combination of the two is crucial in preventing a reading of a poem from becoming mechanical. Those more systematic appreciative activities provides a stable skeleton while those more spontaneous interactions with the poem offer organic flesh of new contextual relations, as the next section will show. As Ginsberg puts it, "What happened in the experience? Many things. I cannot enumerate them all nor give them

a sequence. Experiencing aesthetically is organic. Aesthetic joy occurs in the sense of wholeness in which what happens fits together in harmony" (Ginsberg, in Mitias *Possibility* 63).

The result, an aesthetically valid interpretation, manifests the beauty of a poem without excluding endless other equally aesthetically valid interpretations. Therefore, the translator needs the sensitivity to perceive a panoramic contextual relations for this objective. As Wolfram Wilss puts it, "Nonetheless, contextual sensitivity should be regarded as one of the highest criteria of assessment of intelligent translational behaviour, because context is a kind of interface between the individual translator's relation to his internal world and his relation to the external one" (131).

The way a poem may be read through contextual relations and how its readers may approach it echoes the psychological mechanism of the human mind, appreciating in a holistic way, which is a subject of Gestalt Theory. As Dufrenne notices, "... ordinary perception does not always stop at mere identification, as Gestalt psychology has clearly shown. This school of thought extends the word 'form' to the very expression of objects, which is a stage beyond the spatio-temporal organization of the given figure which allows us to isolate and identify an object" (Dufrenne, 142).



As Norman R. F. Maier and H. Willard Reninger point out, "Writing is the communication of thought through language, the presentation of which is disciplined by psychological law" (11). Maier and Reninger establish a model to demonstrate how an artist, either a painter or a novelist, interprets an urban scene, based on a concept of organization taken from Gestalt theory (24), which chimes with the system of contextual relations and will be proven enlightening in poetry reading and translation in the following sections.

Maier and Reninger's model can serve as a framework for the gestalt in a poem and for its embodiment in poetry reading and translation. On this issue, Michael Riffaterre's theory of the locus of style provides supplementary support:

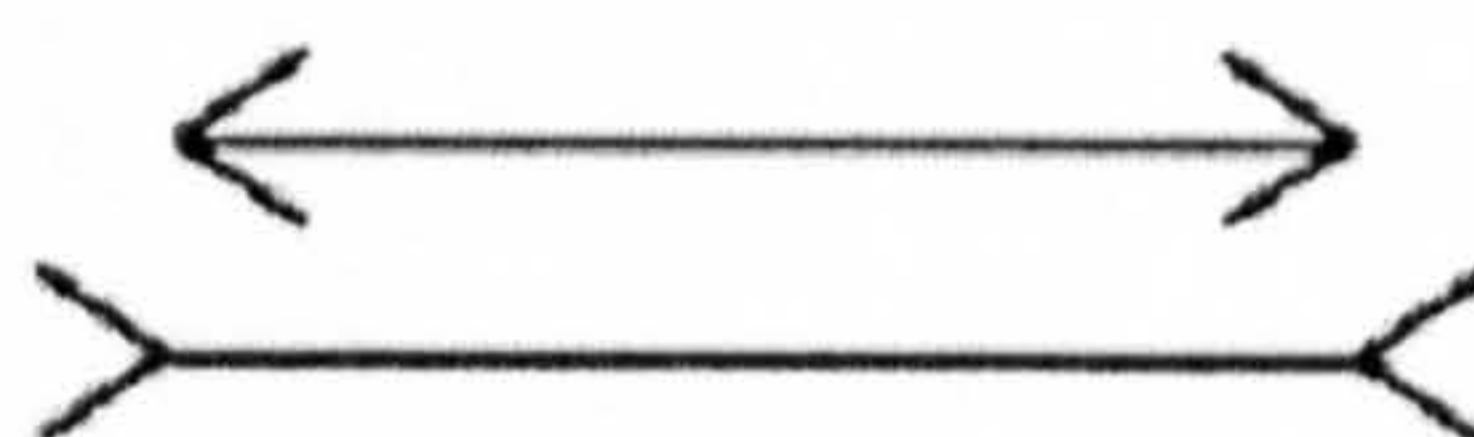
The definition of literary style as a departure from the linguistic norm raises difficulties of application in style analysis. ... I therefore proposed to replace the notion of overall norm with that of stylistic context, and to study stylistic devices (hereafter *SD*) in relation to this context. The context, by definition inseparable from the *SD*, ... is a variable and constitutes a series of contrasts to the successive *SDs*. Only this variability can explain why a linguistic unit acquires, changes, or loses its stylistic effect according to position, why every departure from the norm is not necessarily a fact of style, and why style effects occur without abnormality. ... We can therefore define the stylistic context as a pattern broken by an unpredictable element (this contrasting factor being the *SD*).

Style is not a string of *SDs*, but of binary oppositions whose poles (context/*SD*) cannot be separated. (Riffaterre, *Stylistic Context* 207)

As is anticipated in Riffaterre's statement, one of the ways to view the relationship

between style and its context is to view the relationship between an offsetting field and a figure explored by Gestalt psychology: the figure of style is an effect of variation of stylistic devices offset by the field of context of the work. However, one should not presume that there is a stable or fixed constitution of either the field and the figure. Both are fluid and interchangeable.

Anna Cluysenaar warns that “[a s]tylistician [sic] must not behave like a rigid geometrician, insisting that the two horizontal lines on the right in Figure I are equal in length, just like the two on the left. ... Of course, they are. But in their changed context, they seem different, the one below appearing shorter than the other” (Cluysenaar, 17).



Müller-Lyer Illusion

In fact, we may further her point. It is exactly this kind of effect and how aesthetically effective it is that a stylistician should pay attention to and that a poet should be working on. A poem is meant to say more than what the mere text is linguistically meant to do. The aesthetic qualities emerge from the text as a gestalt does from the forms and patterns in those gestalt pictures. “[T]his form-meaning,” as



Mikel Dufrenne argues, "is not so much the logical meaning, which can be extracted from the poem in order to be translated into the language of prose as it is the poem's poetic meaning, which it exhaled like perfume and which is the work's genuine garment" (Dufrenne, 143). The metaphor of fragrance manifests how the aesthetic quality comes from a work and yet cannot be perceived physically in a work. Quality results from the organic multi-layered contextual relations in a work.

Nonetheless, there are two crucial elements which poetry shares. One is the spontaneity and intuitiveness that underlies the stimulus-response activity and the other are concepts from Gestalt Theory. The latter will be developed and elaborated in the next chapter.



## IV. From Gestalt to Poestalt

### Out of Gestalt Theory

Christian von Ehrenfels (1859-1932), in his paper "Über Gestalt Qualitäten/On Gestalt Qualities" (1891), first introduced the notion of gestalt, "Gestaltqualitäten" (Gestalt qualities), to explain observations of wholeness in perception (Ellis 1-11).<sup>241</sup> However, "the first formulations of Gestalt psychology were made in 1912 by Max Wertheimer, who, together with Wolfgang Köhler and Kurt Koffka, founded the new movement. It was to become a major revolution in psychological thinking" (Wolman 231). What these founding fathers of the school were most interested in at first were the phenomena concerning perception (4 Gross). They believed in inspecting perceptual scenes holistically (Köhler, *Task* 34).

"Starting with Von Ehrenfels in 1890, the notion of Gestalt qualities had made some inroads into sensory psychology, but it was not until the 1920's that Gestalt psychology became concerned with problems of thinking" (Mandler, 235). In the 1920's and 1930's, emerging in Austria and Germany, the Gestalt school of

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<sup>241</sup> The term "gestalt" was first introduced by C. von Ehrenfels but it is disseminated by K. Koffka and M. Wertheimer. See "Gestalt" in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Psychology*.

psychology advanced a holistic viewpoint in explaining human behaviour.<sup>242</sup>

Wertheimer brought up a fundamental "formula" of Gestalt Theory:<sup>243</sup> "There are wholes, the behaviour of which is not determined by that of their individual elements, but where the part-processes are themselves determined by the intrinsic nature of the whole."<sup>244</sup> To broaden the narrower definition of *Gestaltqualitäten* by Christian von Ehrenfels, who focused on visual phenomena,<sup>245</sup> Köhler advanced, "'Gestalt' as a noun contains two meanings; besides the connotation of shape or form as an attribute of things, it has the meaning of a concrete entity per se, which has, or may have, a shape as one of its characteristics" (*Gestalt* 104).

Ready examples include that a melody stays unchanged no matter how the

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<sup>242</sup> It was a reaction to Behaviourist theories that attempted to analyze all behaviours into stimulus-response units (Gross 4) In the psychology of the late nineteenth century, "when investigating perception, one has first of all to examine the simplest local facts of which perceptual field, say the visual field, consists, and to ignore or to remove from these elements all secondary ingredients and disturbances which tend to obscure the true simple nature of the elements." (Köhler, *Task* 34) They held that disturbances that were often explained away as "illusion" were phenomena which needed to be approached through ways other than analytical ones. It was not long before for psychologists of this school to develop ways to explain the nature of such illusions, to compare it with the nature of other interesting facts, and to see whether, in this fashion, general rules would be discovered which could prove useful in explaining many phenomena (Köhler, *Task* 34).

The first psychologist to research human perception in a holistic way who consequently became the first Gestalt psychologist was Max Wertheimer (1880-1943). In 1912, he performed a series of experiments on the stroboscopic movement or apparent movement, for example, between the two shadows on a screen that show up consecutively, which had received tremendous attention, and established Gestalt psychology as a school in the discipline.

<sup>243</sup> Friedrich Schumann may have discovered the following phenomenon earlier than Wertheimer that "incomplete figures tend to be perceived as complete; nearness, as well as equal distances among the components makes for the grouping of visual components into larger wholes; vertical symmetry favors perceptual connectedness; ambiguous figures tend to be seen as "good" figures; properties of figures, such as grouping and organization, have their origin in both central and stimulus factors." Schumann did not establish a systematic framework to investigate these phenomena. See "Schumann, Friedrich" in Zusne.

<sup>244</sup> Wertheimer opposed the basic approach of science: "Isolate the elements, discover their laws, then reassemble them, and then the problem is solved." ("Gestalt Theory" 2)

<sup>245</sup> In German, the word "*Gestalt*" is often used as a synonym for form or shape. Ehrenfels, taking the case of shape as the most important and obvious among his qualities, used the term "*Gestaltqualitäten*" (Smith, *Structure and Gestalt* 125).



key is changed as long as the relative pitch differences among the notes stay the same or that a shape is recognizable as the same one despite changing in size or colour as long as relative spatial relations among its parts remain the same. In addition, one may describe a room through descriptors such as "clear" or "chaotic," a movement as "steady" or "erratic," a face as "relaxed," "tense," or "soft" et cetera (Köhler, *Task* 46). The perception of such a holistic quality, Köhler points out, "play[s] a [sic] most important role among the aesthetic characteristics of our perceptual environment and, naturally, also in the products of artists" (*Task* 46). Köhler encompassed more human activities into the theory: "In fact, the concept 'Gestalt' may be applied far beyond the limits of sensory experience. . . . [T]he processes of learning, of recall, of striving, of emotional attitude, of thinking, acting, and so forth may have to be included" (*Gestalt Psychology*, 105). Koffka<sup>246</sup> also holds that Gestalt Theory explains more than the perception phenomenon. Koffka points out, "[o]ur reality is not a mere collocation of elemental facts, but consists of units in which no part exists by itself, where each part points beyond itself and implies a larger whole" (*Principles* 176).

The concepts adopted for this thesis are those of the basic concepts evolved early in the development of this theory, as will be shown later. Later Gestalt

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<sup>246</sup> "Of the three founders of Gestalt psychology, Koffka was the most prolific writer. He was also a propagandizer of the Gestalt theory. . . . The book *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (1935) is the only such presentation extant and a classic of psychological literature." See "Koffka, Kurt" in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Psychology*.



psychologists, such as James R. Pomerantz, have tried to prove the basic concepts scientifically only to make them seem quite useless in the real world.<sup>247</sup> These are experiments about “what rules make the elements of perceptual patterns add up to larger units or segregate from one another” (Arnheim, “Two Faces” 820), which include the rules of visual grouping of Wertheimer and Helmholtzian theory. More importantly, as Rudolf Arnheim puts it, “although the quantitative indicators proposed in those studies did indeed serve to define levels of complexity by objective measurement, they did so at the price of neglecting the structural qualities that characterize shapes perceptually and account for their general psychological relevance” (Arnheim, *two faces* 820).

There is another common misconception in later Gestalt research concerning the relationship between the parts and the whole—i.e. the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Richard Gross, one of the holders of this concept, uses the chemical structure of water as an example to illustrate this: “Another example is the case of Water (H<sub>2</sub>O), which is composed of a mixture of hydrogen (H) and oxygen (O) but the properties of water are very different from those of hydrogen or oxygen taken separately” (Gross, 242). Ironically, this example only proves exactly the contrary to the sum-is-more concept according to his own logic. Gross seems to neglect

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<sup>247</sup> To see how clearly people perceive the gestalt in the pattern, Pomerantz set up comparative groups and compare the statistics of their reaction. The results were quantified and treated analytically. See Pomerantz 150-70.

completely the fact that the compound, though possessing a new quality of its own, loses at the same time the independent qualities of both of its elements.

What happens in fact is the metamorphosis of quality. Koffka, one of the three founding fathers of Gestalt psychology,<sup>248</sup> was not comfortable with such quantification. He saw it in this way: "the whole is something else than the sum of its parts, because summing is a meaningless procedure, whereas the whole-part relationship is meaningful" (Koffka 176). However, although he showed insight in highlighting the "whole-part relationship" by pointing out that "the whole is something *else*," Koffka did not explain just why exactly "summing" was meaningless.

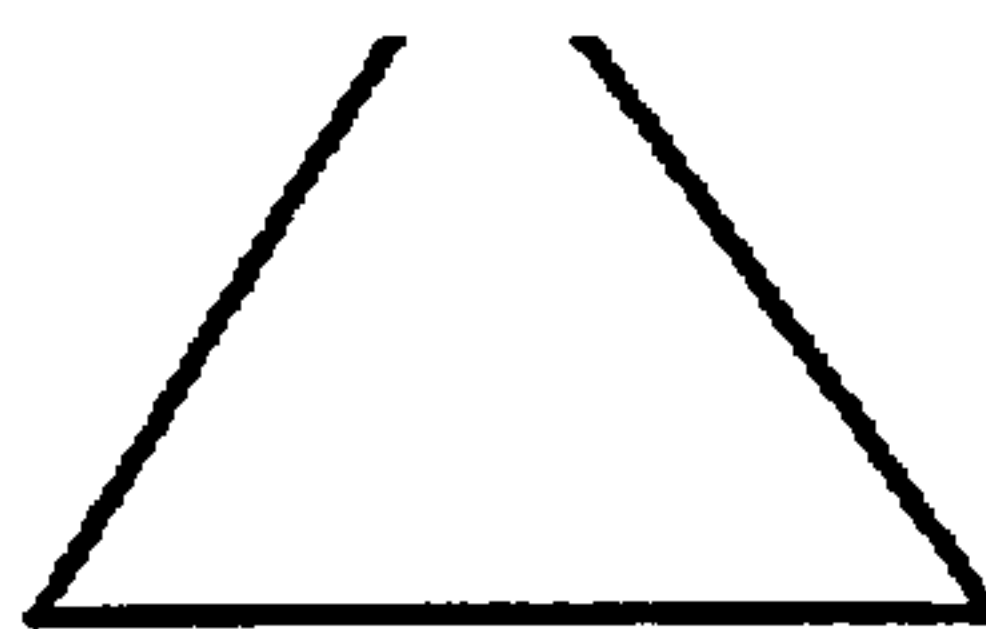
In the example above, when hydrogen and oxygen fuse to become water, they assume the property of water and when they break up, they regain their original properties as gases. As in the chemical reaction between materials whose properties change when compounded with other elements, texts possess different linguistic and literary qualities in different contexts. However, there is a crucial difference that needs to be pointed out. In a chemical reaction, the ingredients involved are only those elements we put into the test tube. In the chemistry of reading a poem, there is another element added besides those elements from the work itself, i.e. the reader,

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<sup>248</sup> Besides Koffka, the other two are Wolfgang Köhler and Max Wertheimer.

who in itself is a complex compound. This compound works both as the enzyme that ignites the aesthetic potentiality of the work as well as a new addition of significance to the work.

The relevance of this element, the reader, is clearly demonstrated in the following experiment. In the demonstration of the perception of movement in static diagram, a part of the law of Prägnanz, i.e. closure tendency in perception, E. Lindemann presents before viewers triangles that are partially covered. One of the examples is shown below:<sup>249</sup>



(Ellis 176)

When the missing part is small, viewers tend to see the figure as a triangle without the gap. The two tilted sides close up in the viewer's mind automatically—or more correctly, the psychologist argues that the mind closes it up. It seems that the quality of triangle is “added” by the mind onto the originally meaningless three straight lines. This argument is a consequence of omitting the fact that the three lines only *change* into an arrangement that means much more to the viewer. But with a more active

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<sup>249</sup> In other demonstrations, the missing part in the triangle may be located on one or more of the sides with three points stayed intact. For typical examples, see Gross 241 and Katz 40.



association or a certain cultural background in the viewer, any arrangement of three straight lines may assume certain significance.

Let us assume that there are three straight sticks on the desk meant to be used to show that, even with one angle missing in the triangle as in the diagram above, the viewer can still imagine seeing. However, the sticks lie randomly before being arranged into place. They may form an asterisk (if they cross each other on the middle) or an arrow sign like  $\rightarrow$ . In either case, they are already “more than” just three simple lines; they form a geometric figure. They may lie parallel to each other. To a Chinese native speaker, the form recalls the character for the number three, 三, and to one with considerable knowledge of *The Book of Changes*, the triagram for *qian*, heaven, in the Eight Triagrams. If this viewer happens to be bilingual and familiar with English, he/she may recall the letter E with an imagined vertical stroke when he/she switches the cultural viewpoint from Chinese to English. From the highly differentiated natures in these “wholes,” it is clear that the “whole-part relationship,” i.e. the significance of the quality of a gestalt perceived, comes from the combination of the gestalt and the viewer instead of solely from the gestalt itself.

Summing is a meaningless procedure exactly because there is no such procedure as summing but only rearranging of the elements and changing of viewpoint, and the “whole” is shaped by the viewer’s mind. When a viewer thinks

that he/she is summing up the elements perceived into a form this is in fact a process of rearrangement. The moment the rearrangement is finished, the "whole-part relationship" exists synchronically, so it can neither be "more" or "less." The relationship changes when the viewer assumes different viewpoints. Quantity is not an issue when this "whole-part relationship" is concerned. What matters is quality. A "whole-part relationship" depends on how the viewer sees it and, more importantly, whether the viewer's mind is prepared or equipped to see it or not. A person who is foreign to Chinese culture will not see three horizontal parallel straight lines the way an expert in *The Book of Changes* may. Where the perception of a gestalt is concerned, to conceive is to perceive.

"In fact, the concept 'Gestalt' may be applied far beyond the limits of sensory experience. According to the most general functional definition of the term, the processes of learning, of recall, of striving, of emotional attitude, of thinking, acting, and so forth, may have to be included. This makes it still clearer that 'Gestalt' in the meaning of shape is no longer the center of the Gestalt Psychologist's attention" (Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology* 105). In poetry appreciation, it is the aesthetic significance generated in the resonance of all of the elements readers see that is important. Roman Ingarden describes this with a musical metaphor, "In their whole multiplicity, they lead to a peculiar polyphony of aesthetically valiant qualities which

determines the quality of the [aesthetic] value constituted in the work"<sup>250</sup> (*Cognition* 13). As Empson points out, where literature, especially poetry, is concerned, "the notion of unity is of peculiar importance" (Empson, *Ambiguities* 238). The aesthetic experiences from reading a poem are both an analytical and holistic mental product. Empson describes it well with a culinary metaphor:

For one may know what has been put into the pot, and recognize the objects in the stew, but the juice in which they are sustained must be regarded with a peculiar respect because they are all in there too, somehow, and one does not know how they are combined or held in suspension.

(*Seven Types* 6)

One receives input word by word and interprets the work with a certain literary background, just as a cook gathers the ingredients from the market and cooks them in the way he/she thinks suitable. There are aesthetic effects that can be traced to specific elements in a work, such as emphases created by contrast in imagery or rhythmic or rhyming pattern, but these duplicatable parts can only explain part of the story, such as the known ingredient of a certain dish. The taste is in the mouth of the taster holistically. When this flavour needs adjustment, it is the non-holistic elements, such as the proportion of certain ingredients, the measurable and analyzable steps of

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<sup>250</sup> Ingarden distinguishes the "artistic" value of a work from its "aesthetic" value, the former of which is about what the work is by itself while the latter of which involves the viewers. So the former remain constant with the work itself, at least while it stays intact; the latter changes with viewers of different times and cultures.



processing, where the cook can execute the change. To examine the result, it is necessary to return to the holistic approach of tasting.

Like the flavour of a dish, the unique beauty of a poem originates from the organic combination of the work in the reader's mind holistically. When one critically compares the SP and the TP, it is the "flavour" that is the locus for the comparison, while to revise the TP it is still the physical, analyzable elements, such as the text and layout, that one can exert the effort. Paradoxically, as in gastronomic criticism, to examine the result of the revision it is necessary to see holistically. On the other hand, the concrete and analytical process of revision or criticism on certain part of a poem may be in fact guided by the holistic "flavour" one tastes in the SP. The relationship between this concrete and analytical process and the holistic "flavour" readers acquire from the SP and the TP is where the concepts from Gestalt Theory comes in.

## Between a Poem and Its Poestalt

In the process of looking at a gestalt diagram, there is a point when the viewer comprehends the relationship of all the patches and lines on the paper and sees the gestalt therein. Similarly, there is a point in the process of reading a poem when the reader sees the gestalt therein. It is when the aesthetic significances of all

of the contextual relations discerned by the reader stand out, cohere aesthetically and resonate with one another. It can be sensed/felt but cannot be described, a situation the Chinese poetics has described as “*zhi neng yi hui, bu neng yan chuan*” (it can be felt by the mind but cannot be related with language).<sup>251</sup> In a word, the “gestalt” of the poem may dawn on a reader as he/she starts enjoying its unique aesthetic pleasure. Because there are fundamental differences in the visual gestalt studied in gestalt psychology and the use of the gestalt term here (which will be thoroughly discussed later), a new term has been coined “poestalt,” as an amalgamation of the two key words, “poem” and “gestalt.”

In addition, this indescribability of the poestalt is not the impossibility to produce any description per se, but the impossibility to produce THE description, which the mind sees in the reading. What can be expressed in language is the description of what contextual relations are perceived at first, what aesthetical significances they may have in relation to one another, how and why some relations stand out as aesthetically valid and some fade as aesthetically incoherent, how and why the ones thus emerge resonate with one another and somehow cohere. For example, a glimpse of the unique beauty, i.e. the poestalt, of either *Shakespeare's Sonnets* or “*Qiu Xin*” by Du Fu can be hinted at in the explications of the contextual

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<sup>251</sup> I.e. 只能意會不能言傳. This is a concept from Chan Buddhism. See the section, “Epiphany: After Chan Buddhism,” in Chapter 2.

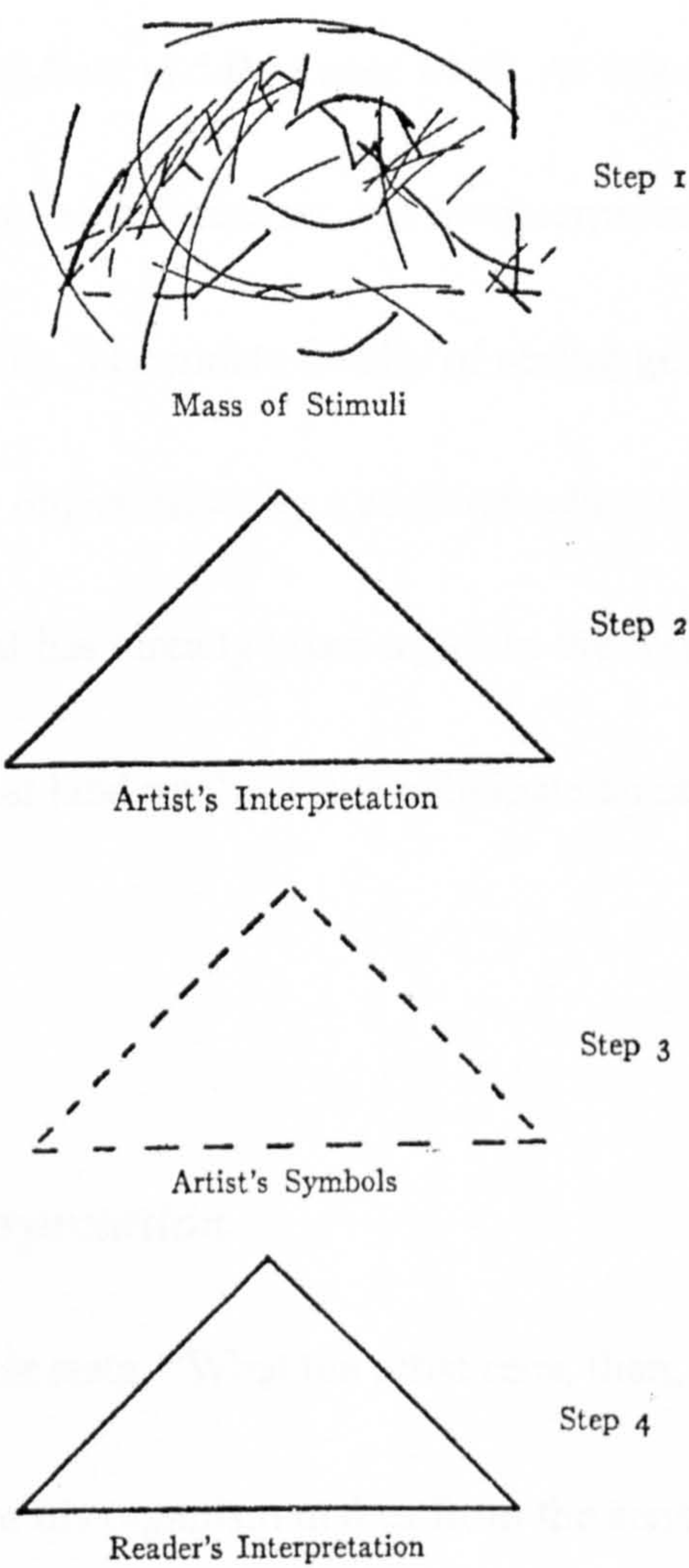
relations in them explored earlier.

## Maier and Reninger's Model

Two activities are highlighted in the model: choice and organization. Maier and Reninger start with an artist looking at "a street corner in the depths of a Chinese district, at dusk" (13). Despite the details of an urban scene, something catches the artist's attention, "a young urchin looking mistily into the chaos of his own environment" (Maier & Reninger, 13). The choice of this focus could be because, subjectively, the viewer tends to pay more attention to human figures out of his/her personal aesthetic taste or because, objectively, the figure of the young urchin stands out because of its own quality, brighter in colour or shocking in shape, for example. But, even the mere choosing and locating it in the work, no matter where or why, is an activity of creativity, for the act of choice itself can be creative. Then the artist admires the scene and builds his work surrounding this focus, while the rest of the dazzling urban night scene, which may be interesting as well, fades. In this process, details that support the observed object aesthetically stand out and those that do not fade into the background. Then, "sensations coming from the sense organ become organized, and consequently we experience groupings. Some groupings are stronger and therefore stand out from others: objects are examples of such groupings. Other



groupings, having less stability, permit us to see first one thing and then another” (Maier & Reninger, 46). The importance of organization is correctly pointed out, “Imagination is not of a creative nature unless it involves a reorganization of experience.” Maier and Reninger’s model is presented and commented on as follows:



(Maier and Reninger 15)

*Step One: Mess of Stimuli*

Maier and Reninger propose, “Step 1 represents an unformed mass of stimuli. These set up nerve impulses on the retina (in the case of the eye), and the end result is a visual experience—and object on a certain background. The object is the result of a specific grouping of part of the mass of sensations which [15-the diagram-16] are aroused by the stimuli; while the remainder of the mass of sensations fall back and become the background” (Maier and Reninger 14-6). At this stage, the relation between each stimulus may be still unclear, but the interpretation has already begun with the process of choosing. The innate faculty of seeing gestalt is working on deciding the focus, i.e. an object offset by a certain background. In other words, the subjective side of the artist has already taken a part in the formation of this raw material. Those stimuli that land on this stage anticipate already what will turn up in Step Two.

### *Step Two: Artist's Interpretation*

Maier and Reninger state, “What the artist sees, then, is determined by the nature of the grouping that his organism makes from the sensations, which are in turn determined by the stimuli that come to him from the outside world: this is his interpretation, or configuration (Step 2)” (Maier and Reninger 16). As Maier and Reninger point out, the perfect definition of the result is not a coincidence. As the



innate faculty of seeing in gestalt will work by itself, there will be a vague shadow of a well defined form when we try to look for something, even as open-ended as the first step. It is because “[t]his mass is already a processed product under a certain screening principles out of a larger mass of sensational input.” (Maier and Reninger 14) As one may argue, when we admire the scenery in the Grand Canyon, one may piece up several looks to make a picture of what the panorama may be. One may pick up different details when one sees from different viewpoint or for different purposes. A painter and a geologist may see in the same scene different details and come up with different impressions as they adopt different screening principles, so to speak. Maier and Reninger also admit that the artist in their model may change his/her mind in the process (16). It is only natural that stimuli from the outside of the scene, in this case, such as the artist’s background or his/her contemporary artistic style, may add new factors in the formation of this idea and influence its evolution.

### *Step Three: Artist’s Symbols*

Maier and Reninger believe, “If the artist wishes his interpretation to be experienced by other people, he must present them with a pattern of symbols (Step 3)” (16). The diagram in the third step is the physical embodiment of what the artist produces in the second step. The artist may mean the space between what he/she



physically produce to be filled up in the way it is meant to be. These spaces are inevitable. A proper use of this physically non-existent element in the diagram is as crucial as creating the physically existent lines in the diagram in order to accomplish what he/she aims to achieve. These spaces demand that the viewer take a creative link from one to another to form his/her own observation. It may not only be spaces on canvas or paper. In fact, more than often, it can be the mental gaps between what is aroused between the elements of the work. Taking the situation in this model for example, the viewers may wonder at first at how the urchin is depicted, seeing no aesthetic significance in the details—therefore cognitive gaps occur here, which may be meant for some aesthetic effect to emerge in appreciation. When the gap stays an obstacle in appreciation, producing no aesthetic significance, it would be the result of either the incompetence in viewers or the artist. The significance of this gap to poetry translation will be further discussed and demonstrated later. The thesis terms this space as “gap for aesthetic potentiality” or GAP hereafter.<sup>252</sup>

#### *Step Four: Reader's Interpretation*

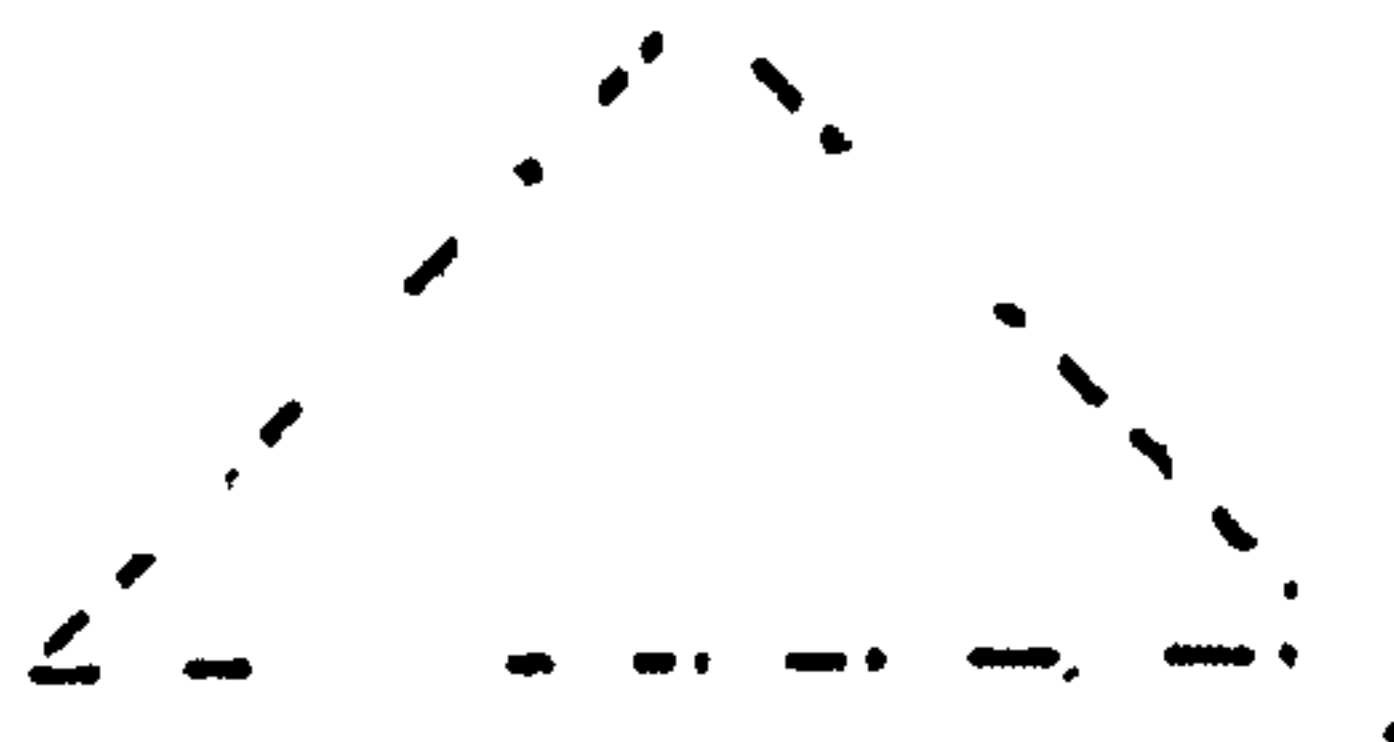
Maier and Reninger take it for granted that this step presents what the viewer may have in his/her mind when he/she sees the diagram in the former step. “Because

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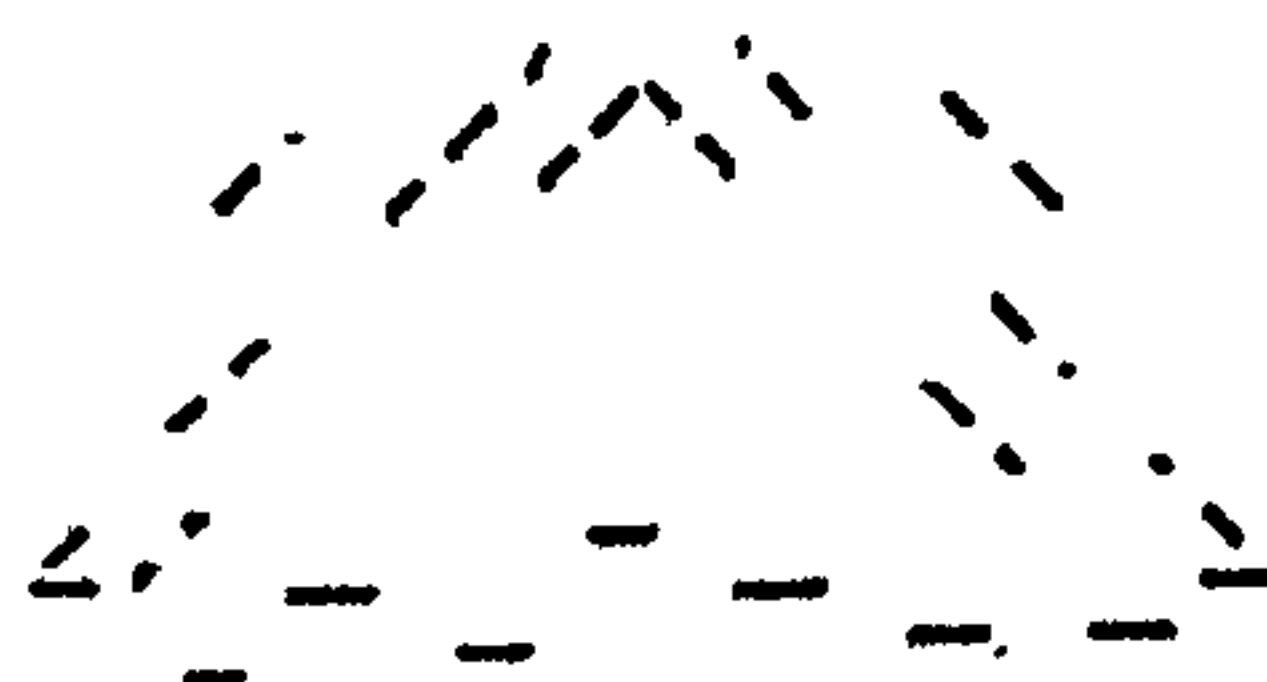
<sup>252</sup> Its significance will be fully investigated in the next chapter.

of past conditioning these symbols will produce certain experiences in them [the viewers of the work]. If the symbols function as intended, the experience will approximate that of the writer (Step 4)” (Maier and Reninger 16). In other words, this is the case when the viewer/reader fills up the GAP in the diagram in the way the artist/novelist intends it to be. However, this conclusion is problematic in several ways. Firstly, there seems to be a precept behind this assumption that there is only one and specific result. Secondly, it takes it for granted that the viewer/reader will start where the artist/novelist has finished, i.e. Step Three.

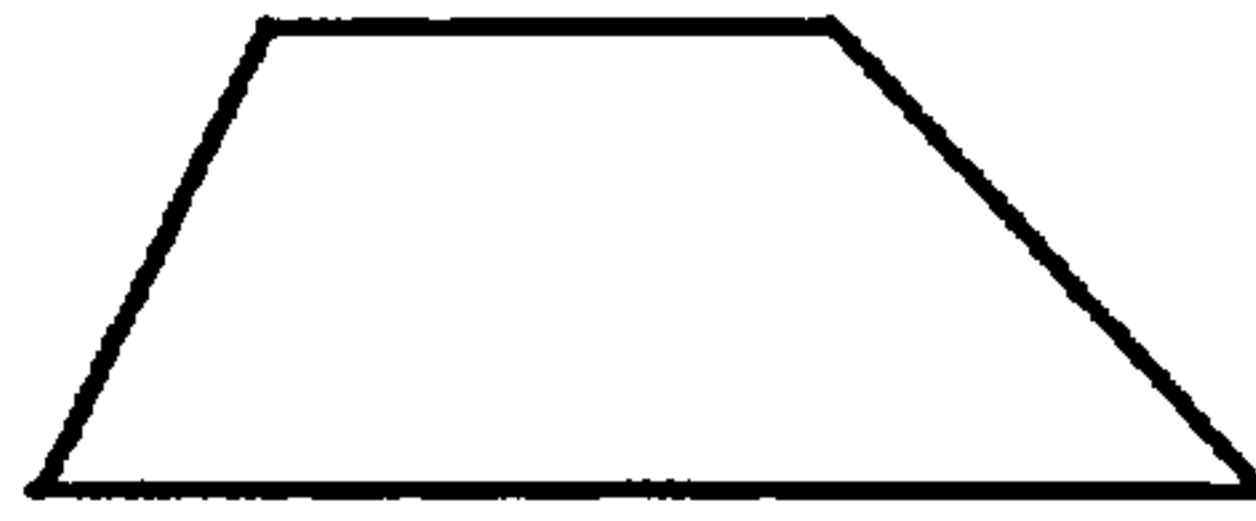
It is only possible, to say the least, that the viewer/reader picks up only part of what is offered them, and he/she sees



Or, see Step Three with his/her own twist in viewpoint and arrives at



As a result the reader might interpret what he/she see in the work as this:



In addition, even although a poem does contain messages that the poet means to convey to readers, poetry reading will not be much different from code deciphering if finding these messages are to be the only goal. Therefore, if “the symbols function as intended,” in the case of poetry, it should paradoxically be something other than what the artist (the poet here) decides, but a kaleidoscopic different results, each of which is a unique complex that contains the messages transformed by being amalgamated with the creativity of each individual reader and the context of each individual reading. The result is at the same time the poet’s and the reader’s. The inputs from both parties are equally important. As Ginsberg describes how he happened to spot and find a cracked window pane at the station beautiful, “The discovery, then, in this case must be appreciated as a process of discovering, of disclosing and uncovering, in the course of which the subject participates in the aesthetic. An object was discovered but equally important was the subject in discovery.” (Ginsberg, in *Mitias Possibility* 64)



## Defenses and Modifications

### *About Gestalt Theory*

Gestalt Theory may be challenged as deficient in that the concepts this thesis extracts from it are deficiently simple for the object, i.e. poetry. Indeed, the resource that this thesis draws from Gestalt Theory, such as the investigation of visual phenomena, are often those concerning two-dimensional, well-defined diagrams of limited size and complexity,<sup>253</sup> instead of the three-dimensional, highly complicated real world of boundless space. This simplification becomes an issue when the theory is applied to art. As Osborne objects, any configuration is “immeasurably more complex even in the simplest works of art than the Gestalten with which ordinary perception operates: ...”(Osborne, “Aesthetic Perception” 312). When it is applied to poetry, to regard the aesthetic qualities in poetry as a gestalt beyond the text may seem to be an attempt to reduce the sophistication of constituents of a poem down to a binary composed of a poestalt on one hand and the text on the other. The problem of such criticisms is that they look in the wrong place for how the theory can be useful. When poestalt is concerned, we are not talking about reducing the complicated organism of a poem into a few poestalts but about SEEING them in a poem. The former concerns about finding out what is supposed to be there in the

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<sup>253</sup> Such as the stroboscopic phenomenon, the Rubin’s vase, the duck-rabbit head and the Kanizsa Triangle. As shown in the related chapters.

poem, as if finding out a chemical resolved in a liquid. The latter involves the chemistry between the work and the appreciative faculty of an individual viewer. This varies between one reader and another, functions differently from one reading to another, and leads, almost invariably, to different results.

As stated above, what a text of a poem is potential of may be the almost endless possibilities of new contextual relations (with a highly diverted factor, the reader, as a possible candidate for a context), like any artistic work. However Gestalt Theory is not used to account for this kaleidoscopic possibility. Where the theory is useful is to explain how a certain contextual relation works and sets forth aesthetic significance. In other words, as in the demonstration above, the theory is not useful in telling how many more interpretations there will be of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* or Du Fu's "*Qiu Xin*." It is useful in manifesting the possible aesthetic significance when certain parts of the poem are read as context and why that can be the case. In this light, simplicity is not an issue, least a problem. In the Chinese philosophical system, everything in the whole universe comes from the result of a certain unique contextual relation of simply two elements, Yin and Yang. The simplicity of the theory and the complexity of the factual situations coexist.

Another point in the theoretical basis of the thesis that may be challenged as deficient is that people simply do not see or read holistically. As the real world is

more complicated than a gestalt diagram, one of the most obvious contentions against the notion of seeing holistically is that, while the diagrams explored in the theory can be viewed at a glance, human beings do not and cannot always look at the world, even a spot as small as a street corner, and see the whole picture of something in one glance. Indeed, the human eye can view only an object within the limit of its natural visual span at one glance. Anything larger than that will have to be pieced up frame by frame. Even within the span, details will more than often be missed and need to be picked up with further looking.

In corollary, it can be argued that one does not and cannot always read the whole poem at one glance but, at least, for the first time one goes through it word by word no matter how swiftly the text is browsed and more than often goes through parts or whole of the work for another few more times before the result of this process accumulates, ferments and evolve into a holistic aesthetic experience. There is little dispute that to view the breath-taking scenery in the Grand Canyon, even just one valley in it, one might need to have several looks from a certain vantage point. For a more comprehensive appreciation of it, one should view it from different heights and angles—besides from a high point—and even from the air in addition to on the ground. Indeed, there are ways of perception and comprehension different from simply glancing at an object, either a painting or a poem, as if at a figure on



paper and the coming up with an idea of the observed object.

However, it is missing the point to focus on the inputting process. The gestalt concept comes into the picture where what has already been read and what the mind sees are concerned, instead of only what the physical eyes read and the reaction at the moment of contact. To express it with a culinary comparison, although it is only obvious that there is an analyzable process in cooking a dish, is not an argument to disprove that when one samples what is already cooked in the pot, the taste comes as a gestalt that incorporates the ingredients and the tasting faculty of the taster. In corollary, there may be an analyzable process or method in appreciating a work of art or reading a poem, which may be highly individualistic at the same time, but this needs not disprove that at the end of the process one may perceive aesthetic qualities that are gestalts of the amalgamation of the work and the faculty of the viewer. It is this stage in appreciation of a poem where the gestalt concepts are relevant in reviewing the aesthetic qualities perceived, a stage when sufficient necessary elements are there and fit into significant relations with one another, which can happen only when it happens.

Before Gestalt Theory can be useful, several issues need to be clarified.

Firstly, the difference between the diagram as the source of a gestalt and a work of art as the source of poestalt. Agreeing that both perceiving a gestalt in a figure and

appreciating the beauty in a poem involve appreciating the object holistically,<sup>254</sup>

Osborne focuses on the dissimilarity between them: "artistic configurations have the uniqueness of particularity whereas the Gestalten of ordinary perception are essentially generalizations" (Osborne, "Aesthetic Perception" 312). Wendell Garner, from a psychological point of view, insists, as in the title of his article, "Good patterns have few alternatives," that a pattern that allows the viewer to see fewer gestalts is more superior for the purpose of presenting gestalt phenomena.<sup>255</sup> In other words, the physical figure for presenting gestalt phenomena, such as the Rubin Vase,<sup>256</sup> is designed to present the same visual effect to all viewers. In contrast, a work of art, including a poem, is open to endless unique interpretations by each individual reader, or even each individual reading by the same reader. This leads to the second issue. How, then, despite this fact, can concepts from this theory be useful for appreciating a work of art? It is because the mechanism is similar for both activities. How the mind's eye sees poestalt in a poem is similar to how the physical eyes see gestalt in a diagram, and this similarity has been discovered in the poetics of

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<sup>254</sup> On the similarity, Osborne holds that, "[s]imilarly, we perceive an artistic configuration directly and simultaneously with its constituent parts: we do not apprehend it by inference from the parts. An artistic configuration has (aesthetic) properties which are not present in and *cannot* be inferred from the parts and their relations. But the differences are still more important than the similarities." (Osborne, "Aesthetic Perception" 312)

<sup>255</sup> See "Good patterns have few alternatives", *American Scientist*, 58, pp 34-42. The "pattern" here is referring to what are physically printed on the page, for example the ink patches of a diagram, so the gestalt is what the diagram may look like. In his point of view, the fewer possibilities, the better is the diagram—gestaltwise.

<sup>256</sup> The diagram was created by Edgar Rubin (1886-1951), a Danish psychologist. See Gross 240

both English and, especially, Chinese literary traditions.<sup>257</sup> Therefore, it is the difference in the input, and as a result also the output, of the two activities that make them develop into almost opposite activities—not the mechanism involved.

### *About Maier and Reninger's Model*

One thing forms the heart of the two activities of choice and organization: i.e. creativity. A typical example is when a viewer/reader needs to deal with gap. Reading and then translating a poem is in many ways similar to what this artist does here: firstly, looking at (reading) the object (the poem) and then embodying what is seen (translating) with the medium (a poem of another language). In both the jobs of the artist and the reader/translator, choice and organization are two of the most important activities, and creativity is an essential requirement. More importantly, the founding concepts of Gestalt Theory, the infrastructure of this model, become useful in explaining how contextual relations work, which will be explored in the next chapters. But, what a painter or a novelist in the model does is not the same after all as what a poetry reader/translator does.

Firstly, the information sources, i.e. the street scene and a poem, are different in nature. In the former, all of the information is objectively exterior to the viewer,

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<sup>257</sup> See Chapter I.



from the overall view to the smallest nuances of every detail. In the latter, the input the reader obtains comes from what the text brings out of the mind in the reader, an interior database and interactive subject. This is a crucial difference that demands different faculties of the person in the activity right from the first step. As the viewer of the street scene obtains all of his/her information from the outside world, this part of the activity requires his/her faculty of perception and choice. In contrast, the poem is already only an indirect source of material. It is the mind that works as the direct source. Secondly, there is a difference between looking at a street scene for visual information and reading a poem for mental stimuli. The choice of visual input may be influenced by subjective factors such as one's preference, but, in their model, it is the objective physiological condition of the eye and the scientific laws of optics that decides what is seen. In reading/translating, subjective factors dominate from the start.

Writing, in their system, is a tool for communication and the major purpose of rhetoric is to make this activity as efficient and effective as possible (Maier & Reninger, 11). It is no surprise that Maier and Reninger hold, "... all art is an interpretation, an evaluation, of our experiences" (13). There is no thought for self-expression, which happens to be an essential element of poetry. The theory of Maier and Reninger stops at the concept, "Language is merely a system of

symbol-relationships which must serve as stimuli to produce a response in the reader approximating the writer's response to the original situation" (Maier & Reninger, 46).

The problem here is that it may be the case in daily business-oriented communication, but it is not the case when language itself is used as material for art. The knowledge of how a language functions is not sufficient here just as the anatomy of the foot is not sufficient to describe how Isadora Duncan danced. This is firstly because in reading a poem the stimulus-response relationship does not end with the actual behaviour of reading and, secondly, because their model neglects a source of stimuli more relevant to poetry reading if not more important, i.e. the responses themselves.

In reading poetry, the responses from the stimulation of the text may themselves become stimuli that bring more responses that may themselves become stimuli that bring more responses and so on. However, this analytical classification of the response-stimulus process is still a simplification of the situation. For all of the responses exist together in the mind, even if it is really possible to distinguish precisely at which stage they happen, and any several to all of them may form aesthetically valid contextual relation when an epiphany happens. For example, a reader may read and sense certain aesthetic value in a poem that comes from the resonance of observations in former readings and the one gained in present reading. It will be futile to try to literally distinguish which reading the observation of this

certain aesthetic value comes from as one tries to find out in which trip among many to the Grand Canyon a certain picture was taken.

Maier and Reninger also hold, "[T]he data or the elements of an integration, rather than the type of process involved, are different in science from those in art. These two kinds of data, which mark the distinction between scientific and artistic interpretations of experience, we shall term *objective* and *subjective* data, the explanation and physiological basis of which immediately follow" (62). This thesis disagrees with this notion. There is one decisive difference that distinguishes scientific and artistic interpretations. Scientific interpretations aim at arriving at what the object really is. There may be new façades of the object yet to be discovered but the interpretation is directed concentrically and objectively at the object. On the contrary, artistic interpretation aims at seeing what the object can be potential of aesthetically. The contribution from the reader becomes constitutional as well as inevitable. The object should contain the potentiality to resonate differently with the minds of different readers from another culture and/or time. Interpretation, therefore, is the subjective resonance between the artist and the object.

Additionally, the concept of language as a code is looming behind their statement, "The writer's configuration comes from a response to a situation; the reader's configuration comes from a response to language. And these configurations



must be nearly identical if the writing is to be successful" (Maier & Reninger, 46). It implies that when one decodes a passage successfully, if a successful way exists at all, he/she will get the message that is meant to be given and it is the end of the activity—a misconception shared by Riffaterre. For example, the space between those short lines given in Step Three, i.e. Artist's Symbol, of this model is so small that it is very unlikely that one would link them otherwise—a result taken for granted under this precept. It also shows that Maier and Reninger may be too optimistic about the congruity between what the artist has in mind, what the artist can actually express in the work, and how much of it, if at all, people can see in what the artist produces. The way this diagram is presented may even imply a work of art must contain an answer to be discovered. These notions are as problematic as thinking that there must be only one real reason for the smile on Leonardo Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. In poetry reading, on the contrary, poetry is supposed to offer new messages if they are to be "news that stays new" (Pound, *ABC* 29).

## Reading a Poem and the Poestalt Translated

The following is a demonstration of the process of reading/translating a poem with the framework based upon Maier and Reninger's model. "*Niao Ming Jian*,"<sup>258</sup> a

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<sup>258</sup> The title literally means "birds singing by the creek." The poem a five-character quatrain from, whose original text of the poem is offered here:

five-character *jueju*<sup>259</sup> by Wang Wei (700-761 AD), is adopted here as the example object. The following is a presentation of the poem with each character glossed with the literal meaning.<sup>260</sup>

<i>ren</i>	<i>xian</i>	<i>gui</i>	<i>hua</i>	<i>luo</i>
People	leisure	osmanthus	flower	to fall
<i>ye</i>	<i>jing</i>	<i>chun</i>	<i>shan</i>	<i>kong</i>
night	quiet	springtime	mountain	empty
<i>yue</i>	<i>chu</i>	<i>jing</i>	<i>shan</i>	<i>niao</i>
moon	to emerge	To startle	mountain	birds
<i>shi</i>	<i>ming</i>	<i>chun</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>zhong</i>
sometimes	to sing	springtime	creeks	there

### *Step One: Stimuli and Echoes*

Just as the artist is exposed to and receives stimuli, readers are exposed to a body of stimuli while reading a poem. What these stimuli may vary with the textual and cultural context and the personal context of readers themselves, with which the work is read. As a result, with each part of the poem from individual characters to

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人閑桂花落  
夜靜春山空  
月出驚山鳥  
時鳴春澗中

(Fu, Wang 76)

<sup>259</sup> A quatrain with either five or seven characters in a line and rhyme scheme of *aaba* or *abcb*.

<sup>260</sup> Literal meaning of each line is not given here for it is already an interpretation and translation itself, a result from the process this section is going to explicate.

larger structures like a couplet, connoting and even denoting differently to different readers, what mass of stimuli it will bring to each reader may be as chaotic at first as the diagram in Step One. It is from this mass of stimuli, an example as shown below, that significant contextual relations will emerge or where the reader tries to look for significant contextual relations. Each block is kept open-ended, since what is provided here is far below the limit of association these lines can entice.

(line one) A non-specific person, a firewood collector or a retired official like the poet. The person/people are at leisure, off duty, or maybe resting. Viewing the scene from a hut, in his garden, on a trail, or while meditating. Osmanthus flowers may imply the season fall. The sweetness of the fragrance. The petals<sup>261</sup> like golden grains. Falling flowers, an image of harvest or aging or the passing of time. Osmanthus-flavoured tea and osmanthus cake. Autumn, maybe (judging by the flower). ...

(echoes and open-ended associations inside line 1) People at rest viewing the flowers. The flowers is a metonym of the stage the person is in. Or, the stillness in the person, a form of withering embodied in the falling flower...

(line two) A mountain in the season spring or a mountain named Spring. Empty as deserted metaphysically or literally—devoid of any object. ...

(echoes and open-ended associations between line 1 & 2) If *chun* means the season spring, it contradicts the implication of the flower mentioned above—any significance here? Is this line providing a temporal condition to the first sentence or a parallel incident to line one? In addition, how about the persons mentioned above if the mountain is deserted. Or is it empty in a metaphysical sense? The poet is known for his Buddhist belief and cultivation of Daoism too....

(line 3) The light of the moon wakes the birds. The birds could be sleeping like the person. The bird could be an exterior embodiment of the poet's emotion

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<sup>261</sup> The flower of osmanthus is usually about the size of a grain of rice and is yellowish.



or spiritual status. A moon that represents the truth in Chan Buddhism? A moon of homesickness? Du Fu, Han Shan, and some other contemporary poets, have heard or been startled by the noise of birds.<sup>262</sup> ...

(echoes and open-ended associations between line 3 & the form two lines) So, with the third line, the second line is more like a temporal condition of the poem than a parallel scene to the first line. A focus shift from where the person is to some valley in the mountain. Action, in contrast to the static state in the first couplet. ...

(line 4) The birds make noises. *Shi* can mean “sometimes” or “from time to time.” So the birds wake more than once during the night. The creek, the metonym of the thing that directs the meditator to the Way in Chan Buddhism. ...

(echoes and open-ended associations among all four lines) How can the moon emerge more than once from the ridge? It must be emerging out of and submerging into the clouds. Changing between darkness and brightness—between Yin and Yang. There is not only action but also sound in the latter half of the poem. An obvious echo with Wang’s another poem, “*Lu Zhai*,”<sup>263</sup> where an empty mountain is also a crucial setting for the other elements in the poem. *Jing* in line three may be significantly arranged at the centre of the line and almost the centre of the poem—the poem may be about the awakening of something. ...

To begin with, the result can be a mixture of stimuli from many sources, including those containing only one element from the text (such as the semantic contents of the character or character phrase), those from more than one elements together (such as echoes across lines), and those from more than one elements which includes some from the reader’s knowledge, faculty and cultural background (such as

<sup>262</sup> As in Du Fu’s 恨別鳥驚心 in “*Chun Wang*” 春望 (A spring view), or Han Shan’s 鳥語情不堪 in “*Niao Yu Qing Bu Kan*” 鳥語情不堪 (annoyed by birds’s songs) (Xiang Chu 336)

<sup>263</sup> See its discussion in Chapter 1. A poem by Wang Wei, contemporary to “*Niao Ming Jian*.”

the knowledge of the plant *gui*). While the literal meaning of the text can still be fuzzy, a semantic picture is roughly visible, like the triangle already vaguely apparent in the model, which is hinting but still far from conceiving an aesthetically valid poestalt.

### *Step Two: Choosing, Organizing and Envisioning*

Then comes a nebula of association and interpretations. Firstly, the reader may assemble the images and the narration in the text and interpret them as a snapshot of life in the mountains. Secondly, the reader may think that there may be a Buddhist observation on nature since Wang was known to be a pious Buddhist at this stage of his life.<sup>264</sup> In this case, he/she may come up with more than one picture. From the mobility of the images, there is the contrast between a static image group, including mountain, flower, and people, and a dynamic one, including creek, moon and bird. From the viewpoint of organism, people, flowers and birds form a group, which consists of living creatures, while the moon, mountain, and creek form a contrastive group, which consists of lifeless objects. One may also find that the season seems to change from autumn<sup>265</sup> to spring in the first two lines. Thirdly, what comes up in the reader's minds may originate from his/her background as well as

<sup>264</sup> See Fu's introduction and *Whazheng Shuju*, pp. 446-452.

<sup>265</sup> It is implied in the flower *gui*, which often stands for this season in Chinese literary tradition. [source to be supplied]

from the text. For example, the association with the poem, “*Lu Zhai*,” will emerge only if the reader has read it before, and the olfactory and culinary association of the plant *gui* will emerge only if the reader has experience a culture that uses it widely in food and drink, such as the Chinese.<sup>266</sup> As Robert Ginsberg puts it, “Experience, not theory, is the creative source for responding, reflecting, and exploring. Philosophers who work on aesthetic matters need to keep their soul full of experience—and not only of aesthetic objects” (Ginsberg, in *Mitias Possibility* 78). From all these, just to name a few sources, the reader receives a massive and interrelated body of stimuli and may see, as the poet sees the world, one or more poetic gestalts emerging as the result of the aesthetic experience of reading the poem. In any reading, there will be an approaching viewpoint adopted somewhere on the way and there will be input in the forms of choice and organization by the reader. The reader may start envisioning what the gaps of creativity/potential of aesthetic effect he/she sees in his/her reading can be. The reader may revise the first reading when any combination more aesthetically significant is possible. For example, the reader may start by interpreting

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<sup>266</sup> The character *gui* 桂 is sometimes mistranslated into “cassia,” such as in the translation of this poem by G. W. Robinson. This is the case probably for the following reason. The character comprises part of the Chinese character phrase for “cassia,” *rou gui* 肉桂 and cassia has been much more familiar than osmanthus in Western culture. And both plants are used to flavored both soft and hard drinks in their own cultures.

In Chinese culture, osmanthus is widely used to flavored drinks and food and makes up an important role in floriculture, while cinnamon is mostly used for medical purpose. In contrast, in Western tradition, cassia, along with its close relative, cinnamon, has been adopted as an ingredient of herb tea and liquor for some time. However, the two plants belong to different families, osmanthus to Oleaceae and cassia to Lauraceae, and are distinctly different in flavor and appearance. The cultural background of the reader is decisive here as to which plant will come up in his/her mind.



the moon from its emotional connotation of homesickness, which is common in Wang's contemporary poetry, and desert it when this choice does not fit with what the rest of the poem is presenting.

One may decide to start unwittingly to read the poem from a Buddhist angle or to view it as a sketch of a Daoist universe. Once this happens, resonating associations will merge to form a more aesthetically coherent picture with the incoherent and un-resonant items or sides of these constituents fading away from the reader's attention. It is of course possible that readers may oscillate among several approaches before they settle on one which may be composed of a combination of those approaches. At a certain point, all of the contextual relations that are still apparent seems to cohere with each other and an aesthetically complete picture thus emerges. The following are the paraphrase of two possible poetsalts from the poem. Each evolves from different combinations of contextual relations, which are only two out of a vast range of possible assortment, and arrives at its own poetalt in different readings:

I. At the ksana<sup>267</sup> of Chan epiphany

A person meditates in a deserted mountain, alone but not lonely. A state of mind that is so tranquil that the falling of the grains of osmanthus flowers becomes a perceivable movement. The tranquility of the empty mountain is

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<sup>267</sup> The shortest unit of time in Buddhist view point. See the entry, “刹那” (its transliteration), in *Da Cidian*.

the embodiment of this state.

The epiphany of the Way arrives as unexpected as the moon emerging from the cloud, the embodiment of the truth. The excitement is hinted in the birds singing in the valley creek. The tranquility in Chan cultivation is one that echoes with life from deep inside one's being, rather than a lifeless stillness.

## II. A glimpse of the Daoist universe on a night in a mountain.

The enlightened Daoist thinker is like a motionless empty mountain, the extreme tranquility of whose stillness is offset by noticing any very slight action taking place near by—the falling of a very small flowers, while the moon appearing and disappearing arouses birds somewhere in the valley brings out signs of life of Nature, itself a parallelism of the relation of the life and the cycle of Yin and Yang. The man here, a subject of will and emotion, is complete free of both, while non-human Nature seems to take them over, with the moon playfully hopping out of the cloud to scare the birds who may be enjoying the game, singing in a valley with a running spring, hence a union of humanity and nature.

The picture of a practitioner of Chan meditation in the first reading may start with the moon as the symbol for the Way in Chan Buddhism. With this reading, the person in the first couplet can very possibly be a practitioner of Chan meditation. With the contextual relation made up of these readings, the rest of the poem accordingly assumes aesthetically coherent significances like the reading offered above. The relationship between the person and the flower may be regarded as a gap of creativity here. The reader may envision that the mentioning of a motion as trivial as the falling of osmanthus only manifests the stillness of the state of mind of the person. The Chan Buddhism allusion to the moon and the spring as the Truth and the

Signifier of the Truth<sup>268</sup> becomes aesthetically valid in this context. The rest of the poem then fits into the picture provided above accordingly. On the other hand, the poetic presentation of a Daoist view of the universe in the second reading may start with seeing the following elements in the poem as in a contextual relation: stillness vs. motion; humanity vs. nature; a relationship separated and yet united, different and yet the same. They imply significantly the prototype of the amalgamation of opposite extremes: Yin and Yang. In *Taiji*, the visual embodiment of this prototype, there is Yang in Yin and Yin in Yang. Within this contextual relation, the structure of the poem becomes aesthetically reasonable: in the first couplet, which represents humanity and stillness, there is an motion going on, slight as it may be (i.e. motion in stillness), and in the second couplet, which represents nature and motion, the objects seems to express human emotion (i.e. humanity in the non-human). Everything has something of its opposite in it.

Examples of an incoherent or un-resonant item can be found in the olfactory association of osmanthus and the emotional side of the moon image that signifies homesickness. They do not fit coherently into either of the pictures and fade away in both interpretations. But of course, this result is in a sense limited by the viewpoint of the two approaches adopted here. There can be nearly endless possibilities

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<sup>268</sup> One of the comparison is found in Scroll twenty five of *Jinde Chuandenglü*. A level of Chan is discussed: Seeing the moon and forgetting the finger that directed your eyes to it, where the moon signifies the Way. See Shi Daoyuan 114 of Scroll 21-30.



conjured up with focuses slightly different from the two here, presenting a panorama of various nuances among different individual interpretations. The mechanism involved in this process will be the subject of later chapters.

As presented above, the text may have a role in all possible associations and connotations but it needs to be read, i.e. to let the reader's view come before arriving at any aesthetic significance. So the sense of control by the text may come from the fact that there can only be a limited number of words in a work and therefore seems to set down a definite and finite border for what readers can produce out of it. However, whether there is a limit in the possibility of interpretation is not an issue because the reader is an indefinite and unlimited factor here. And as Michael H. Mitias puts it,

[A]ny attempt to explain the aesthetic character of experience either from the standpoint of the perceiver exclusively or from the standpoint of the work of art, or aesthetic object, exclusively is doomed to failure from the start—why? Because the aesthetic experience is a complex, organic, event; it is relational in its very essence. It happens, it comes into existence, in an encounter between two types of reality, a percipient and a work of art; and outside this encounter this experience does not, and cannot exist.

(Mitias 8)

If the work is so composed that it can contain a kaleidoscopic assortment of subtly different nuances for interpretation, there will be a sufficient space for interpretation

and gaps of creativity for individual reader.

### *Step Three: The Embodiment—The Translation*

Though a thorough overview of all the contextual relations in the poem in a reading that is aesthetically coherent helps the reader/translator to gain a vintage point over what he/she need to recreate, at the end of the day, it is still a poet's job to achieve it. With however well-rounded reading of the poem in mind from the last stage, a reader/translator can only embody the poestalt he/she sees with a number of clear-cut words, like the fragmented lines in the corresponding step in Maier and Reninger's model.

On the other hand, the poetry a poet prepares in the mind while composing a poem, including that gained from reading another poem, can in reality also only be hinted at with words, a tool that is nothing but fragmentary, before the reader brings out what comes with the words. The reader/translator who wants to convey what he/she reads in a poem to others can only express it fragmentarily with this tool in a way that he/she hopes other readers will be able to see. Therefore, a reader/translator may end with, for example, the two translations offered below from what he/she reads. The first example is by Liu Wu-Chi and Irving Yucheng Lo and the second by G. W. Robinson. Readers can only start from here and see what is presented, going

through Step One and arriving at Step Two and finding whether any poestalt emerges that is composed of aesthetically valid contextual relations among what they read in the TP.

Mind at peace, cassia flowers fall,  
Night still, spring mountain empty.  
Moon rising startles mountain birds  
Now and again sing from spring brook.

(Liu & Lo, *Sunflower* 96)

Men at rest, cassia flowers falling  
Night still, spring hills empty  
The moon rises, rouses birds in the hills  
And sometimes they cry in the spring valley.

(G. W. Robinson, *Wang* 55)

The holistic mental result, i.e. the poestalt, emerging during this activity needs the input of the reader's faculty, including his/her creativity, an important element involved also in textualizing the result of Step Two. These two examples display different choices of the Chan Buddhist and Daoist images, two possibilities that the stimuli of the SP may produce.<sup>269</sup>

In Liu and Lo, something closer to "a Chan epiphany" is apparent. Firstly, *ren* (literally, a person or people) is translated as "mind," hinting that the whole poem may be just a thought. In addition, this singular "mind" and the singular "moon" are

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<sup>269</sup> This thesis does not pretend to be able to pinpoint what the translators were really thinking about, only to discuss what the text apparently presents.



situated significantly at the head of the line without articles. The absence of article presents a clearer visibility of the two topic words and may be hinting at the belief in the redundancy of language of Chan Buddhism. Along with this contextual relation, the one of the highlighted positions of this parallelism, the heads of the two couplets of which the poem is composed is arguably a direct manifestation that the theme of the poem is Chan Buddhism. On top of this, the absence of an article before the two nouns, “night” and “spring mountain,” in line two also supports this implication. All these omissions, therefore, form a valid contextual relation, instead of downright grammatical neglectfulness. The poem can be a revelation of the relationship between the cultivator and the truth he/she is meditating upon. On the other hand, in Robinson, something closer to “a glimpse of the Daoist universe on a night in a mountain” is apparent. The contextual relation between interpreting *ren* as a plural noun and the presence of the article before “moon” can hardly direct the reading as readily as the translation by Liu and Lo to a picture of an abstract contrast between the mind and the celestial body. Rather, it reads more like a general description of the life of people living in the *san* (i.e. hill or hills), another number-neutral Chinese character in the poem interpreted as a plural noun that hints at a generalization. The parallelism here concerns more the way of human life and the way of nature—the embodiment of the Daoist philosophy on the interaction between the man and the

nature.<sup>270</sup>

The translation of *jian* in the last line is another point that decides which of these two contextual relations, Daoist or Chan Buddhist, dominates the mediation of the overall atmosphere. The definition of the character in *Shuowen Jiezi*<sup>271</sup> reads, “it is a place where two hills embrace a stream.”<sup>272</sup> Here, the character means equally dry land and water. As in, “Where is the Lady collecting the vegetable. She is collecting them by the water in the valley” from the poem, “*Cai Fan*,” in the chapter of “*Zhoa Nan*” of *Shi Jing*,<sup>273</sup> the vegetable collectors may be working in a valley with a stream running through it. Since the vegetable, *fan*, is a member of Asteraceae, she is probably doing the job without really stepping into the water. While in the famous couplet, “What touches me is the grass leaning over the brook/ with orioles’ songs heard above in the thickness of the leaves/ ...”, by the Tang dynasty poet Wei Yingwu,<sup>274</sup> it apparently emphasizes the water. The two translations of *jian* apparently adopt different meanings of this character. “Brook” in Lo and Liu emphasizes the water connotation. This choice not only finds intertextuality in Wang

<sup>270</sup> The thesis, at this point, is going to stop at pointing out this direction only, as the two philosophical systems themselves are not the targets in question, and the poetic phenomena will be explored more thoroughly in the following chapters when the theoretical framework of Gestalt theory is advanced.

<sup>271</sup> The dictionary compiled by Xu Shen (ca 58-147) around 100. One of the earliest and arguably the most important dictionary to this language. A brief introduction to come.

<sup>272</sup> In *Shuowen Jiezi* (Xu)

<sup>273</sup> The Chinese of the title is 召南採芣. The original text is “于以采芣于澗之中.” The poem is about the lady is collecting this certain vegetable for ritual purpose as her duty calls for it and she observes it as a virtuous lady would. See Fu Lipu p. 105.

<sup>274</sup> I.e. 韋應物. The Chinese of the couplet is, “獨憐幽草澗邊生上有黃鸝深樹鳴” (Liu Zhenghao 264).

Wei's contemporary poets but, more importantly, also resonates aesthetically with Chan Buddhist—the allusion to the moon as the Truth and the stream as its signifier that reflects it. “Valley,” Robinson's choice, creates less resonance in Lo and Liu's translation since “valley” emphasizes the dry hillsides that form the topography and does not help as much to imply the allusion. However, against Robinson's translation as context, “spring valley,” directing the attention to the periscopic view of the hills, seems to work more effectively as a metonym of a Daoist vision of the universe.

In the situation shown here, a TP reader can see only whether there are enough aesthetically coherent contextual relations in the TP for a poestalt to emerge, but not in the SP unless he/she is bilingual and gains access to it. Considering this, the importance of aesthetic coherence in the TP is obvious. A TP needs to be able to produce any poestalt on its own before it can do its job as a translation to transfer that of the SP where a poem is to be rendered a poem; and there needs to be enough aesthetically coherent contextual relations before a poestalt can exist. It is legitimate to include the conceptual system behind the poestalt this thesis advances as a necessary criterion in the criticism of poetry translation.

To start with, a part of a translation may be regarded as problematic when it is incongruous with the poestalt which the contextual relations in the translation forms—if there have already been sufficient aesthetically coherent contextual



relations in the text.<sup>275</sup> Examples can be found in Robinson's translation of "*Niao Ming Jian*." Firstly, *yie jing* in the second line of this translation is literally rendered into "night still" without article as in that by Liu and Lo. With the other nouns in his translation either headed with an article or as plural as English grammatical convention requires, this absence becomes aesthetically incoherent in the contextual relation among other nouns—i.e., it does not bring any aesthetically valid significance.<sup>276</sup> As a result, the absence of an article here looks more like grammatical neglect, unlike its counterpart in Liu and Lo, which enhances the overall Chan Buddhist ambience. Secondly, the omission of punctuation in the first three lines of Robinson provides another example. In comparison with Robinson's translation, the punctuation of the first couplet of Liu and Lo separates the two lines into short noun phrases, conforming with the telegrammatic syntax in the SP and, paradoxically, forms a syntactic unit close to the SP which does not contain punctuation.<sup>277</sup> The omission of the punctuation conventionally necessary between the two sentences in the second couplet renders "mountain birds" the crux in an ambiguous grammatical structure that is necessary for the overall contextual relation

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<sup>275</sup> And, again, this is not a scientific phenomenon that can be proved but a literary appreciation that needs to be argued.

<sup>276</sup> The line, viewed isolated, may seem to try to imitate the penta-syllabic structure of the five-character jueju. However, with none of other lines show any attempt to this effect (the last line even double the number of syllable to contain ten), this argument is not supported by its context either.

<sup>277</sup> It is achieved not only with the commas inside the line whose the position conforms with the conventional pause in the line of a five-character quatrain, but also with the punctuation at the end of the lines. In the convention of classical Chinese poetry, every line is a complete syntactic unit, unlike the convention of English poetry which allows run-on lines.

of this translation. In this ambiguity, the phrase is both the object of “startles” and the subject of the following line. It brings “Now and again” to the head of the last line a frequency adverb that modifies ambiguously both of the actions in the two sentences it hinged. This double ambiguity highlights the adverb “now.” In the contextual relation of mind-moon that has already carrying aesthetic significance of Chan Buddhism, the highlightedness of “now” become resonant aesthetically since it echoes the goal of Chan Buddhism, i.e. the immediate enlightenment—“lay down the killing knife now and you become a Buddha at once”<sup>278</sup> [emphasis mine].

In a word, Liu and Lo use and omit punctuation just where the occasion calls for it. In contrast, the absence of punctuality at the end of the first three lines of Robinson’s translation brings little aesthetic significance to any contextual relations therein and results more in confusion than in ambiguity. The run-on structure in the first three lines only brings syntactic and grammatical confusion instead of the aesthetic ambiguity in Chinese syntax. Readers may need to reread when proceeding from one line to the next to realize that the following line is already a new sentence. It also makes readers wonder how many of the four sentences are included in the compound syntax linked by the “and” at the head of the last line, which occupies a highlighted spot and brings forth little aesthetic significance since its position there is

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<sup>278</sup> One of the earliest records of this is in Scroll 25, which says, “On the moment you throw away the killing knife, you achieve the level of Arhat 阿羅漢果” (Shi, *Jingde* 115).



not supported by any other contextual relation in the translation. The significance of aesthetic coherence in critical comparison between SP and TP's will be elaborated later.

#### *Step Four: A New Cycle and Beyond*

The idealistic assumption in the last step of Maier and Reninger can hardly happen and, even less probably, be applied to poetry reading. They could have elaborated and explicated the description of the fourth step--"If the symbols function as intended, [readers'] experience will approximate that of the writer (Step 4)" (16)—and demonstrated how it could actually work. However, they did not. An important issue is left vague here: just how exactly does a reader appreciate a work, either a passage from a novel or a poem, and earn an aesthetic experience that approximates to what the artist intended? In fact, in the place of Step Four, there should be another cycle containing Steps One to Three and the result that comes up in the Step Three of this cycle would probably be different among different readers, as has been demonstrated by the examples offered above. So, the poem keeps regenerating itself in different readings. Hugh Kenner puts it well, "No poem is an end product" (*Pound Era* 170). As the translation of a poem is supposed to be a poem in its own right, neither is it an end product.



Between reading a poem and translating it, one thing in common is to let all of the contextual relations occurring to the reader/translator to form a poestalt. In the case of reading, any possibility can coexist with another and resonate in a reader's mind, but in the case of translation the one put down on paper will exclude all the other. The difficulty for a reader/translator will be to arrive at one that is most aesthetically compatible to the SP in the context where the reading/translation happens. In comparing different options and settling down to a final text, translational criticism becomes inevitable and important. The thesis will apply Gestalt Theory to the framework of contextual relation to see how poestalt may emerge and investigate several issues relevant in the translational criticism specifically for poetry translation.

## **Part Two: The Application**

## V. On Gap for Aesthetic Potentiality

### Gap for Aesthetic Potentiality

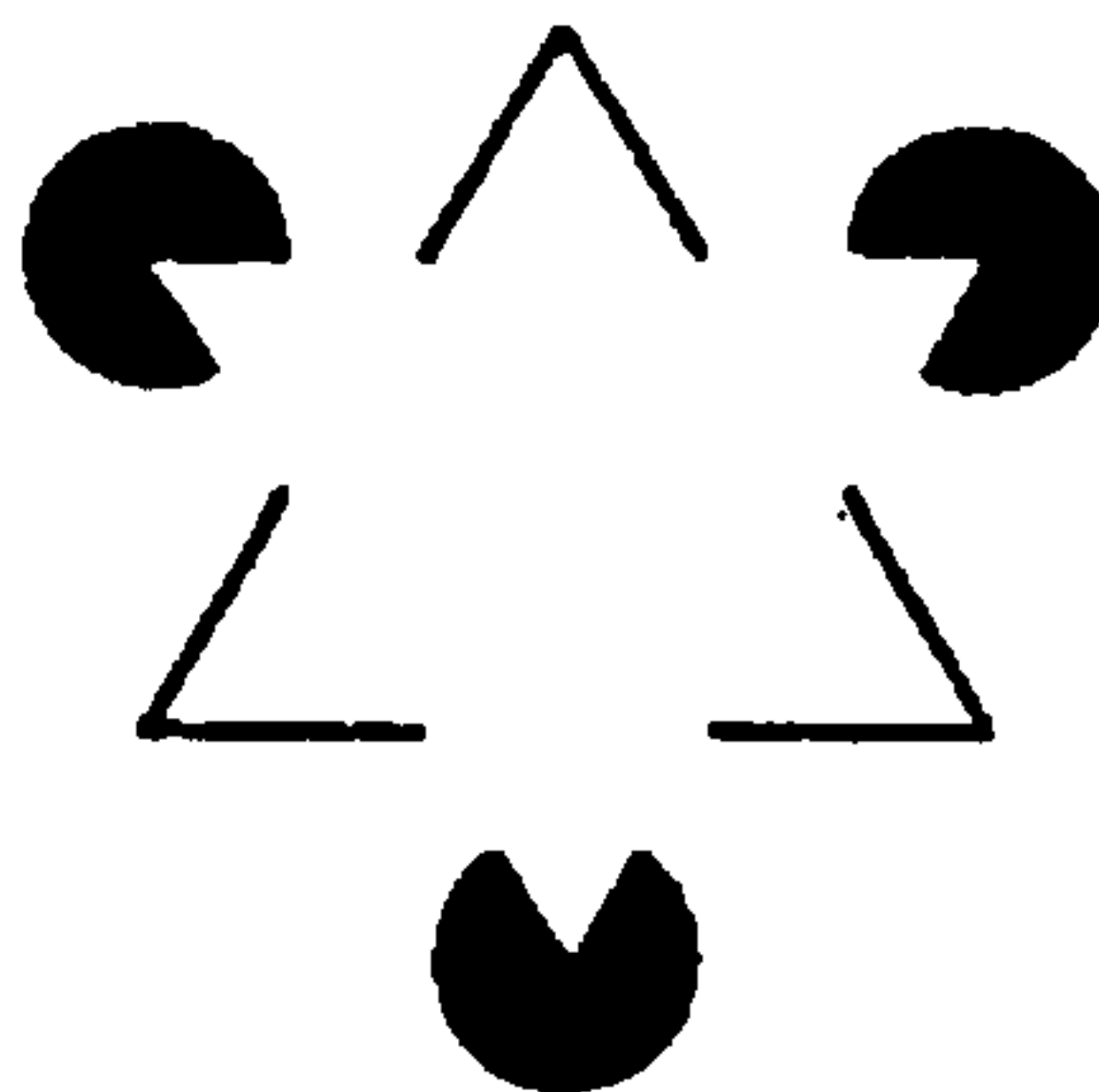
#### The Kanizsa Triangle

As shown in the second and third steps of Maier and Reninger's model, the artist/novelist builds up his/her work with the physical constituents of the medium, represented by the short sections of line in the diagram, and what is significantly absent, i.e. the space between any two short lines and the space surrounded by them. Each is as important as the other in the achievement of the artistic goal, which is by nature holistic. It is the space where the gestalt happens—as in The Kanizsa Triangle. However, before that, it remains a gap potential of the possibility. The artist/novelist may adjust the short lines to see if anything happens. Therefore, the space is termed a Gap for Aesthetic Potentiality (as GAP hereafter).

In the case of poetry translation, a translator has to deal with the GAP's in the SP and then tries to create a TP with GAP's of such arrangement that the overall aesthetic effect can be compatible with that of the SP. The Kanizsa triangle is adopted as the demonstration of the different conditions of GAP and of their



significances. The diagram is shown below:<sup>279</sup>



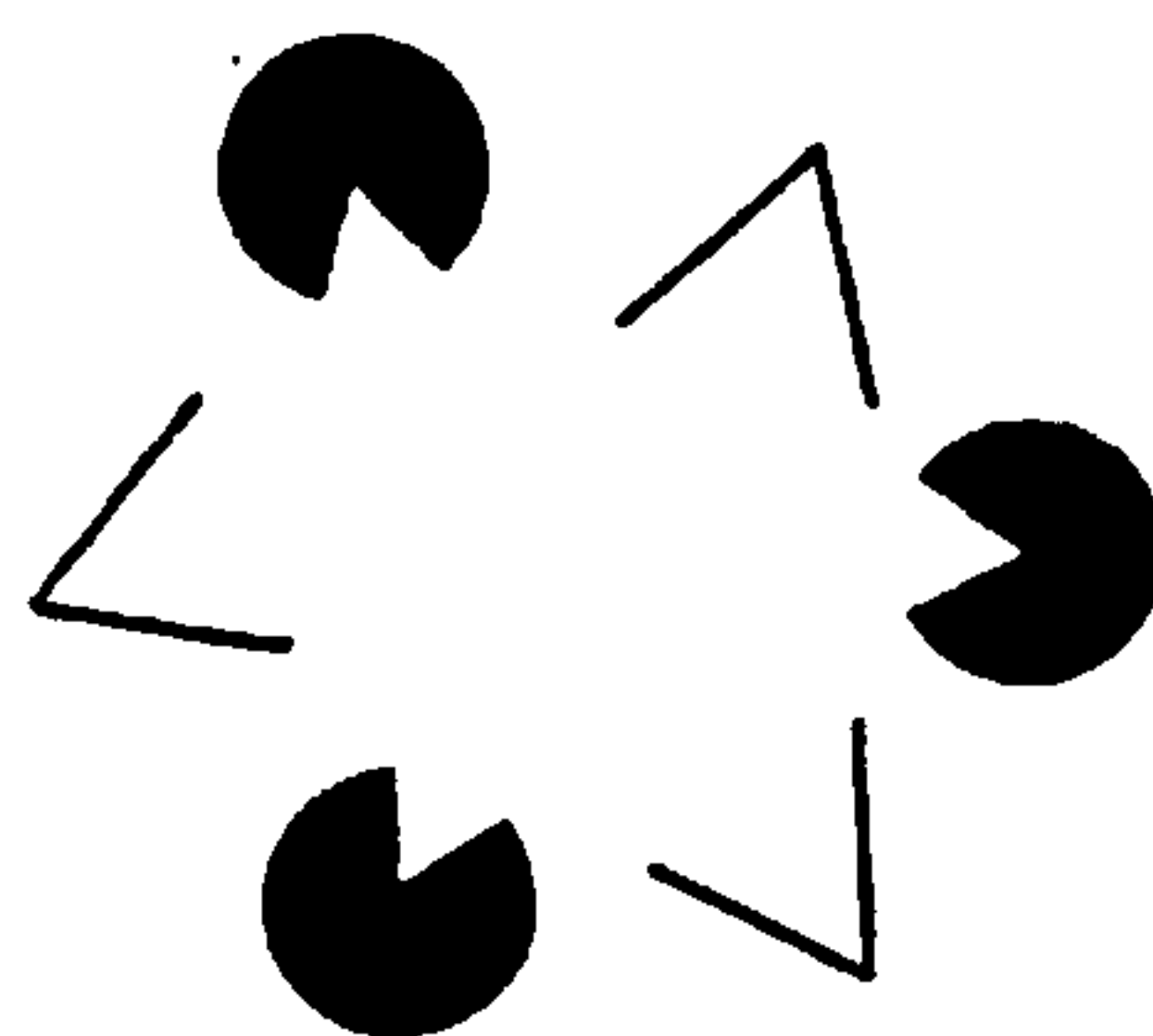
It contains six constituents, the three incomplete circles and three V's. They are so arranged that the viewer is supposed to see a reverse triangle, non-existent but apparent, filling up the space among them, overlapping another partially revealed triangle beneath. On the transition from being unaware of the phenomenon to seeing it, the mind of the viewer is caught between the pleasant twilight zone of seeing the triangles while knowing that they in fact does not exist per se and enjoys a sensation of surprise unique to this experience.

The impact of the gestalt, i.e. the phenomenon of seeing the two triangles, is controlled firstly by the way the patterns are arranged and secondly by the size of room left among them. To begin with, the patterns need to be arranged in the right way for the GAP to work. Inaccuracy in position or direction to a certain extent, as

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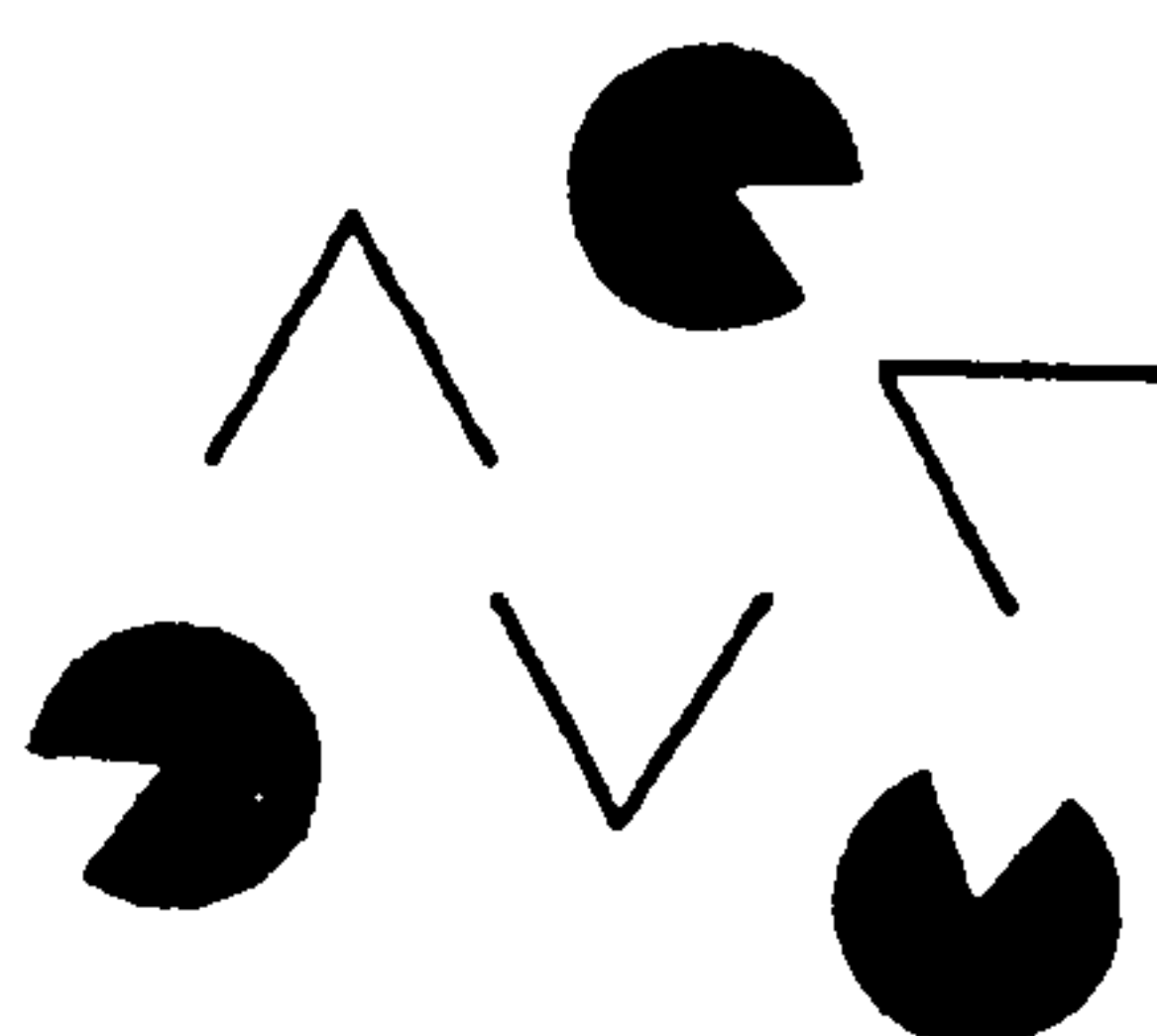
<sup>279</sup> See Sutherland 224.

shown below in Situation I,



Situation I

may be detrimental to the intensity of the experience. When the arrangement is as deficient as shown below in Situation II,



Situation II

the gestalt may be lost completely even all of the constituents are there and each are identical as those in the original diagram.

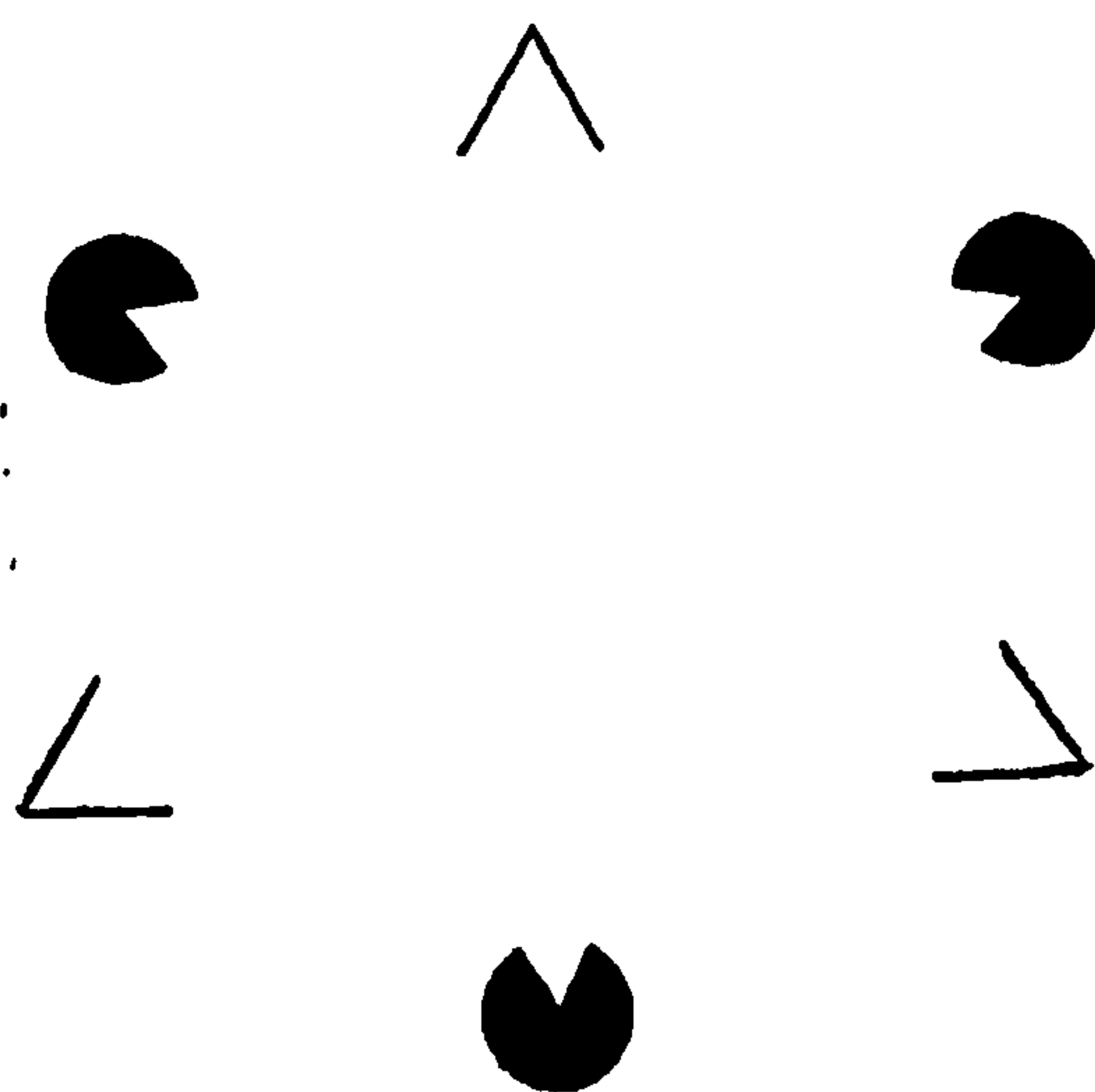
Moreover, the distance between them is also crucial. When they are put too near to one another, as shown below in Situation III, the triangles will physically exist but the gestalt is lost, since there is no transition from non-perception to

epiphany: the activity turns from seeing the gestalt in the mind to merely looking at a diagram on paper.



Situation III

On the other hand, when the constituents are placed too far apart, as shown below in Situation IV,



Situation IV

the relation between them becomes too weak to generate a gestalt. Those viewers who have knowledge of this psychological phenomenon may have to force



themselves to make out the triangle. This is not a spontaneous reaction and therefore that unique sensation will be compromised. Those who are ignorant of the phenomenon may simply miss the gestalt completely as in Situation II. The gap becomes aesthetically non-potential.

Paradoxically, there is a range within which the farther apart the constituents are arranged the more intense the sensation becomes since a larger transition from non-perception to epiphany will happen. The limit depends on the faculty and background of the viewer as well as the production quality of the diagram. No matter how the way or/and distance may vary, the limit of this flexibility is that one change somewhere should be counterbalanced by others elsewhere so that in the end the phenomenon can happen. There should be an overall coherence that modulates how these constituents be arranged when alteration happens in reproduction. In other words, a certain coherence among the constituents of the reproduced diagram is vital for the gestalt to happen.

## Aesthetic Coherence

Although translating a poem is like reproducing a Kanizsa Triangle for those who do not have access to the original, there is one crucial difference between the two activities. In the Kanizsa Triangle, the elements are constant, including the three

shapes and the three V's. Their arrangement and the locus of GAP are constant too: the former as shown on the page and the latter the space in the middle as the artist of the diagram arranges it. In contrast, both of the constituents and GAP of a poem are subjective and therefore fluid, which entails the following differences.

First of all, there may be a chicken-and-egg relationship between the constituents observed and the GAP formed for it is difficult to decide definitely whether it is that the constituents observed hint at the GAP or that a GAP the observer believes to exist makes some constituents to stand out. Secondly, there can be more than one GAP and therefore more than one poestalt in a poem. A reader/translator may find that a part of the poem forms its own effective GAP and is beautiful in its own way, which can be independent from the poem. Consequently, the poestalt or poestalts emerging from reading a poem is subjective and fluid, unlike the gestalt in The Kanizsa Triangle, which can be only what the creator of the original work designed it for. In addition, the coherence that poetry translation needs to maintain is an aesthetic one, which is subjective and open for interpretation, unlike the coherence in The Kanizsa Triangle, which is spatial, objective and with one and only standard answer. Thirdly, there may be constituents alien to the work itself such as those subjective inputs the reader/translator contributes. When this happens, it becomes a crucial issue how this alien element can contribute to the formation of a

more effective GAP and the emergence of a poestalt.

Despite these differences, the concept of GAP is enlightening in pointing out an important principle. In the criticism of poetry translation, it is more relevant to compare the tangible but non-physical poestalts that emerge holistically from effective GAP's to the reader, just as in reproduction of the Kanizsa Triangle, it is whether the non-existent but visible triangle emerges to the viewers that matters instead of whether the shapes and V's are reproduced correctly. Before it can conclude with a description of the poestalt of the SP and the TP, a criticism needs to discuss the GAP and the constituents that form it and how it works.

## GAP, Poestalt and Translation

### When What Matters Is the Angle

"Q" by Bob Cobbing, given below, is adopted here to demonstrate the points discussed above and the significance of applying the concept of GAP and aesthetic coherence in poetry translation:

Q

Kew

Queue

Cue

Q

Coo!



(Cobbing np)

Cobbing confesses in his *ABC in Sound*<sup>280</sup> that to appreciate the poems in the anthology, “so much of the creative work must be done by the reader” (prologue np). He points out that his poems are “SOUND poems.” In addition to the fact that the text itself presents all of the aural patterns a reader may need, he still offers tips on how to recite them<sup>281</sup> (Cobbing, prologue np). Curiously, there are discernable arrangements showing that these poems may also be meant to be read silently for the pleasure of the visual effect. Firstly, each poem owns its own page, layout, font and font size. All of them are vision-concerning devices. Secondly, his instructions for how to recite the poems also give away some clues. For example, it is not insignificant that Cobbing suggested “I” be read “needle sharp,” the image of which visually echoes the letter in question, and that “W” be read palindromically, the form of which is a palindrome. While these may be meant by the poet, readers may find aural, visual and other constituents in the poem.<sup>282</sup>

Aurally, there is a string of five /kju:/s , a pause and an ending in a /ku/ with an exclamation mark. There is scarcely any grammatical or syntactic structure to

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<sup>280</sup> In this anthology, there are twenty six poems, one for each letter.

<sup>281</sup> The syntax of the original text (“those poems are SOUND poems so much of the creative work must be done by the reader.”) may be problematic, which may mean “those poems are SOUND poems, so much of whose creative work must be done by the reader.” Cobbing offers instruction for all poems except for those of G, N, Q, S, U, and V.

<sup>282</sup> See endnotes to those poems (Cobbing np).

justify any certain way of reciting. “Coo” after the mute blank line creates a contrast in sound in the two parts of the poem with the absence of /j/ and an interjection mark attached, the only punctuation mark in the poem at the end of the work. Both may provide textual bases for different aural interpretation. The “coo,” pronounced as /ku/, provides a link to the main body of the text with its aural similarity to the sound of “Q.” The absence of /j/ smooths the reading and hints a lingering end, while braced by an interjection mark, “coo” may pick up the meaning of “surprise, surprised pleasure, or wonder” (Merriam-Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, CD-Rom) and indicate a tone of excitement.

Visually, the poem is composed of six lines and a space before the last line. The length of the lines of the main body exhibits a cycle of rising and ebbing. It starts with one letter in the first line, three in the second, five in the third, three again in the fourth and an echoing one in the fifth. It forms an equilateral obtuse triangle, a neat parallel. In addition, there are a letter *e* in the second line, two in the third and one in the fourth. The letter *e* forms another cycle of rising and ebbing inside this triangle text block, or another triangle. There are several parallel structures fabricated within. Besides the symmetry of double triangles, the letter “Q” occupies the odd lines. These arrangements form a visual parallelism in the shape of the textual layout. The last line, preceded by a blank line, contains a three-lettered word followed by an

exclamation sign. The *c* in “*coo!*” provides a visual link to the main body of the text with its similarity in form with “*Q*.” In addition, doubleness exists visually in every line. The first line is doubled with the fifth line. In the second line, there is a *w*, “double *u*” and *K* is composed of a *v* looking its own reverse reflection. In the third line there are two *ue*’s. The *C* in line four is doubled with that in the last line. In the sixth line, there are double *o*’s.

Semantically, the poem is enigmatically obscure. Some semantic possibilities of each words are laid out as arranged in the text for an overall observation, as shown below:<sup>283</sup>

- Q:                   the seventeenth letter in the English alphabet;  
                      an abbreviation of several terms;  
                      an initial of a person’s name.
  
- Kew:               The name of the area in the London borough of Richmond upon Thames,  
                      where the Royal Botanical Garden is situated.
  
- Queue:            the action of lining up;  
                      a group of people lining up;  
                      the tailpiece of a violin or other stringed instrument;
  
- Cue:               a signal to begin an action;  
                      a leather-tipped tapering rod used to strike the ball in billiards and other  
                      games.  
                      the shoe of an ox;

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<sup>283</sup> The definitions of all these items except “Kew” are based on those of *Webster’s International Dictionary Unabridged*.



Q:                   the seventeenth letter in the English alphabet;  
                       an abbreviation of several terms;  
                       an initial of a person's name.

Coo                 Making the low soft cry of a dove or pigeon;  
                       Making a low soft sound sometimes fatuously often in showing affection  
                       or pleasure or in seeking to placate.

As this thesis argues that the reader's personal imaginative observation is also a candidate for a constituent, one more category is added here. The poem may look like a simplified silhouette of a standing person with a barrel belly. As this poem is a poem of the letter "q" itself, it can be argued that the poem imitates the form of the letter "Q" with the main body as the body of the man/the circle in "Q" and the last line as the foot/the tail of the letter.<sup>284</sup>

So what will emerge to a reader from all the elements offered above—and still open to addition? In other words, would some of them somehow form a GAP that mean something to a reader and display a poestalt in his/her eye?

## Seeing and Translating

When only the lexical constituents of the poem are taken into account, an

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<sup>284</sup> It is arguable that the gist of this poem is that the poet happens to discover that the very few word of the sound /kju:/ can make up this neat form, which also reveal the preference of seeing gestalt, i.e. holistic form, among unrelated elements that is deeply bedded in human nature. In a sense, this poem is an embodiment of that nature. If poetry is "the best words in the best order," as Samuel Coleridge put it, the words in this poem are words that are read like the letter q arranged in one of the best possible orders to form poestalt, which makes this piece of work legitimately a poem.

aesthetic effect emerges readily in a visual way: the whole form hints at the letter Q with the upper section as the main body and the ending line as the tail attached to it. It is a poem about the letter Q that looks rather like the letter Q. One of the poestalts here is the aesthetic experience of being caught between thinking of it as a list of the few homophonic words pronounced as *q* queuing up into a form of “Q”<sup>285</sup> with the sudden attempt change of ground in the ending and admiring the humorous cleverness and accuracy of the arrangement. Read this way, this poem embodies a beauty that is made from the lexical basis of its language, which cannot be duplicated in Chinese, a language using characters not alphabets.

When the phonetic constituents stand out as the most prominent feature,<sup>286</sup> an obvious pattern among the constituents emerges to form a GAP. There are five homophones in a row as the main body, another word of similar pronunciation catching up after a break. One for each of the four tones of Chinese is offered below, just to exemplify the situation:

[ <i>xian</i> , first tone]	[ <i>lai</i> , second tone]	[ <i>zi</i> , third tone]	[ <i>shuo</i> , fourth tone]
暹	來	子	蒯
祆	萊	姊	芍
仙	來	紫	勺
鮮	銖	梓	朔

<sup>285</sup> It may be argued that the layout of the poem is not arbitrary when one find the neat parallelism in the structure as well as the double triangles discussed earlier.

<sup>286</sup> Or, it can be the case that this element is chosen as the starting point to translate the poem and one choice leads to another.

掀	駭	仔	姁
笑！[ <i>xiao</i> , fourth tone]	懶！[ <i>la</i> , third tone]	枝！[ <i>zhi</i> , first tone]	是！[ <i>shi</i> , fourth tone]

While these translations may reproduce a set of constituents present in the SP, this linguistic coincidence of the homophony of the characters brings much less surprise than in English as Chinese is notorious for its homophonosity. It can be argued that they are like the shapes and V's in Situation IV shown earlier, where their relation to one another is too weak to produce aesthetic effect—the gap among them is aesthetically non-potential and borders on a downright word play.

The following is a series of attempts to bring in more constituents and see how translation may change accordingly. With another look at “Q,” one would find another constituent: the cycle in the number of the letter. It can be dealt with by corresponding the number of letter with the number of stroke in a character. One stroke in a Chinese character is substituted for one English letter. With this adjustment, one may come up with the following example:

乙	[one stroke, / yi / in third tone]
巳	[three strokes, / yi / in third tone]
以	[five strokes, / yi / in third tone]
已	[three strokes, / yi / in third tone]
乙	[one stroke, / yi / in third tone]
矣！	[eight strokes, yi in third tone, an exclamation]



In the next example, visual constituents are also taken into consideration to adjust the translation into one more compatible aesthetically. Firstly, the letter *q* appears at the head of the odd lines in the main body. Secondly, the second and its adjacent lines, i.e., the first and third, looks radically differently while, on the other side, in the third and the fourth lines the similarity resurfaces. Another group of characters is substituted, in which the radical 人 is substituted for the letter *q* and the radical 壬 for the “ue” repeated in the third and fourth lines. The translation becomes

人	[two strokes, / ren / in second tone]
仁	[four strokes, / ren / in second tone]
任	[six strokes, / ren / in second tone]
壬	[four strokes, / ren / in second tone]
人	[two strokes, / ren / in second tone]
喏！	[eleven strokes, / re / in third tone, an interjection for greeting]

To accommodate the new constituent, there is an adjustment in the stroke number in each line. The same number of strokes, i.e. one more stroke, is given to each line so as to conform with the waxing and waning contour of the SP. In other word, this adjustment aims at the purpose that the contextual relations in translation may cohere

aesthetically with its intention to reflect the cycling of stroke number through the SP.

The last line of “Q” is unique among the lines in three ways. It is pronounced differently from the rest of the lines, isolated from the rest of the poem and the only line that consists of a word with a punctuation mark. This uniqueness becomes more significant when one realizes “coo!” resembles both auditorily and visually the word, “cool”—a colloquial exclamation of praise for anything cleverly done. These foregrounds the childlike, playful tone of “coo.” With this in mind, an interpretation emerges, i.e. a poestalt. The “coo” with an exclamation mark is an exclamation of admiration of a child at the end of a word game, who happens to find an assortment of phonetic and lexicographic phenomena, i.e. a queue of /kju:/’s, and arranges them into this triangle. It steps back (therefore a blank line) to view the whole work for a moment and releases an exclamation. This is about a creative mind the process of creating—no matter how frivolous the work may seem at first sight. Furthermore, it may also be an imaginative presentation of a reader’s reaction to that triangular main body. A reader reads the main body. A moment later (therefore a blank line), he/she realizes that the letter block is more than five homophonic words but contains several overlapping curious structures. Seeing that, he/she releases an admiring exclamation. Arguably resembling a big exclamation mark, besides the letter Q, “Q” can be a metapoem that embodies in itself the process and reaction of reading a curious poem.

The following translations are rendered with this interpretation as the key to tune the aesthetic coherence in the TP. As shown above, the translation of “coo!” becomes pivotal, for the choice of the character for “coo” becomes semantically limited. This is a place to start the job. The character here needs to be an exclamation with similar connotation and this choice modulates how the rest of the main body is translated.

If the exclamation *miao*<sup>287</sup> (literally, “wonderful!” or simply “cool!”) is adopted, the rest of the poem can be modulated accordingly as shown below,

眇	[nine strokes, / miao / in third tone]
淼	[twelve strokes, / miao / in third tone]
縹	[fifteen strokes, / miao / in third tone]
渺	[twelve strokes, / miao / in third tone]
眇	[nine strokes, / miao / in third tone]
妙 !	[seven strokes, / miao / in fourth tone, and exclamation specifically for praising something done cleverly or originally]

The choice of these characters also reflects the inner connection in the SP with radicals of character in Chinese as the counterpart of the letters in English. The second line, 淼, as in the SP, is different from the other four lines in the main body by consisting of different radicals, while the other four lines all contain 目 and 少.

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<sup>287</sup> I.e. 妙.



The last line, 妙, also as in the SP, shares the radical 少 with lines 1, 3, 4 and 5.

To show the significance of aesthetic coherence, another exclamation character, 哈 (an onomatopoeia for laughing sound<sup>288</sup>), is adopted and the following translation is produced:

禾	[five strokes, / he / in second tone]
効	[eight strokes, / he / in second tone]
穌	[twenty five strokes, / he / in second tone]
和	[eight strokes, / he / in second tone]
禾	[five strokes, / he / in second tone]
哈 !	[nine strokes, / ha / in fourth tone, an exclamation of joy or triumph]

哈, *ha*, echoes the comic, childlike tone in “coo” for it is the Chinese onomatopoeia for “laughing loud and hard”<sup>289</sup> and being intertextualized with the Chinese for “the distorting mirror,” *haha jing*,<sup>290</sup> which is one of the regular items in an amusement park. The rest of the choices change accordingly. Besides the cycle in the number of strokes to reflect the number of letter in SP, the second line is made up of radicals different from the other lines. In the meanwhile, lines 1, 3, 4 and 5 share the same radical, 禾. The repetition of the radical 口 in the last line duplicate the double o in

<sup>288</sup> It basically denotes a laugh with open mouth and loud sound and may connote a great range of emotions, from triumph, sarcasm, mockery, hilarity to joy.

<sup>289</sup> I.e. 哈 in the phrase, 哈哈大笑.

<sup>290</sup> I.e. 哈哈鏡.

“coo.”

Between these two translations, the former gains an extra edge over the last one on that the character 妙, in fact, also connotes “curious,” which can be interpreted as the point of the poem. On the other hand, the latter, i.e. 哈, catches up in the race by its containing two 口’s in the last line which echoes the two o’s in “coo,” which looks just like two pursed little mouths. The character 和, besides conforming with the rest of the conditions discussed so far, fits into line 4 to reproduce the effect of repeated letter “c” in lines 4 and 7 with the repeated radical 口 (literally, “the mouth” or “an opening”), which also appears only in these lines as in the SP.

These TP’s are the results in Step Three—The Embodiment. The GAP’s are all set up and the poestalt is there for readers to see for themselves, open for new interpretation. Even with the readers of this thesis, to whom the whole process and the translator’s intention are kept transparent, they still enjoy this freedom, because when a translator, like a poet, finishes his/her job, the translation, like the poem, is on its own.

## When an Alien Element Joins In<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> This section is developed from the following published essay by the author: “Creative Translation, Translating Creatively: A Case Study on Aesthetic Coherence in Peter Stambler’s *Han Shan*,”

To reproduce the gestalt in a diagram of The Kanizsa Triangle, the artist may only need to copy mechanically the shapes and V's in the same number, quality and arrangement, which are all measurable factors, to achieve a visually compatible result. With poetry translation, this process of modulating aesthetic coherence can be more complicated, like the demonstration in the case study of "Q" where the elements that have been mediated in an attempt to achieve a compatible poestalt in the TP are factors related to the SP on linguistic or cultural levels. However, this may not always be the case. With the incommensurability of the SC and SL and the TC and TL, a poetry translator may look beyond linguistic and cultural resources for effective choices. He/she may introduce replacing or supplementary constituents alien to the SP on these levels.

It is also possible that the translator may creatively import alien constituents simply because he/she thinks that they are artistically more effective.<sup>292</sup> The following case study is one where the alien element is imported to help translating the poestalt in the SP. It will show what the concept of GAP and aesthetic coherence may mean when sources alien to the SP are utilized. An example of such importation

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included in *Translation and Creativity: Perspectives on Creative Writing and Translation*. Ed. By Eugenia Loffredo and Manuela Perteghella. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005.

<sup>292</sup> Or, when he/she, belonging to what Holmes defines in his "fan of meta-literary forms" (*Translated!* 23) as one of the seventh type of poetry translation, translates to express him/herself and to create a new poem "inspired" by the SP. Between these two types of poetry translator, the former still aims at creating an aesthetically compatible poestalt to that of the SP, while the latter aims at accomplishing his/her own artistic goal. However, the case study right below demonstrates the former situation.



can be seen in Peter Stambler's translation of "*Tao Hua Yu Jing Xia*"<sup>293</sup> by Han Shan,<sup>294</sup> an early Tang hermit poet, ca 7<sup>th</sup> century. To comment on this choice and how it works, it is more relevant to see how the GAP related to it in the TP works than through a scrutiny of linguistic correspondence.

In his translation of Han Shan, *Encounters with Cold Mountain*, Stambler makes substantial alterations in the literal texts from time to time; he even goes so far as to substitute an event from his personal life for an image in the original text because he believes that both the event and the poem share the same emotional kernel (Stambler 13). A typical example is the substitution of the cremation of his mother in the translation he titles "Burial." Stambler argues, "Han Shan's seeing the yearning for life in the doomed peach blossoms evoked my recent memories [his mother's death and cremation] so irresistibly that I replaced his image of falling petals...The image is quite different from Han Shan's; the emotional life, I think, is essentially the same" (13). The poem<sup>295</sup> is listed in transliteration below with each

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<sup>293</sup> I.e. 桃花欲經夏. Almost all of the poems by Han Shan are without title. The thesis uses the first line for the function. Stambler gives one to his translation, i.e. "Burial."

<sup>294</sup> I.e. 寒山. Literally, cold mountain.

<sup>295</sup> The Chinese text of the poem is provided here:

桃花欲經夏	
風月催不待	(head couplet)
訪覓漢時人	
能無一個在	(chin couplet)
朝朝花遷落	
歲歲人移改	(neck couplet)
今日揚塵處	
昔時爲大海	(tail couplet)
	(Stambler 35)

character glossed, followed by a literal translation of each line and, then, Stambler's translation:

The original poem:

<i>tao</i>	<i>hua</i>	<i><u>yu</u></i> <sup>296</sup>	<i>jing</i>	<i>xia</i>	
peach	blossom	to yearn	to outlive	the summer	
<i>feng</i>	<i>yue</i>	<i>cui</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>dai</i>	[the head couplet] <sup>297</sup>
wind	moon	to urge	not	to wait	
<i>xun</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>han</i>	<i>shi</i>	<i>ren</i>	
to visit	to seek	Han	time	people	
		Dynasty			
<i>neng</i>	<i>wu</i>	<i>yi</i>	<i>ge</i>	<i>zai</i>	[the chin couplet]
can	no	one	person	survive	
<i>zhao</i>	<i>zhao</i>	<i>hua</i>	<i>qian</i>	<i>luo</i>	
morning	morning	blossom	Transfor- ming	falling	
<i>sui</i>	<i>sui</i>	<i>ren</i>	<i>yi</i>	<i>gai</i>	[the neck couplet]
year	year	people	moving	changing	
<i>jin</i>	<i>ri</i>	<i>yang</i>	<i>chen</i>	<i>chu</i>	
now	today	to rise	dust	place	
<i>xi</i>	<i>ri</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>hai</i>	[the tail couplet]
past	time	was	immense	sea	

(Stambler 35)

The literal translation by line:<sup>298</sup>

The peach blossoms yearn to live through a summer.

They fail to sustain under the urging of the wind and the moon. [the head couplet]

Trying to find if any one from the Han Dynasty,

One will find that none is still around. [the chin couplet]

Morning after morning, the blossoms fly and fall.

<sup>296</sup> The emphasis is mine.

<sup>297</sup> Traditionally, the four couplets of *lushi*, regulated verse, are named in order as *shou-lian* 首聯 (head couplet), *han-lian* 頷聯 (neck couplet), *jing-lian* 頸聯 (neck couplet), and *wei-lian* 尾聯 (tail couplet).

<sup>298</sup> The layout of the SP with blank lines between stanzas and the SP without them are Stambler's.

Year after year, people move and change.	[the neck couplet]
The place where dust rises today	
Was once a vast ocean.	[the tail couplet]

Stambler's translation:

Peach blossoms yearn for a summer's life,	
Shivering before a slight breeze, paling	[stanza one]

In each descent of the moon. Of all the ancients,	
Not one wakes when a bough stirs.	[stanza two]

Leaves of my book curl, and the edges brown	
In the fire that livens my mother's ashes.	[stanza three]

When I stumble my feet raise dust	
Where once the greenest sea rolled.	[stanza four]

(Stambler 35)

The incident in question is adopted to translate the neck couplet of the SP, i.e. stanza three of the TP. The imagery discrepancy looks incommensurable when compared to the counterpart in the SP at first. The justification of this importation starts with two issues: firstly, whether the image, 'yearning for life in the doomed peach blossoms' (13) produces such poestalt from the GAP's in the SP, as Stambler claims; secondly, how Stambler tailors GAP's in the TP out of the event to achieve a compatible poestalt.

Han Shan starts with the personification of peach blossom that 'yearns for a summer's life' in the first couplet. The second couplet focuses on the shortness of human life. The third, presenting a perfect parallelism in syntax and grammar,



summarizes the brevity of the duration of both peach blossoms and human beings.

The last concludes the poem with an observation on the transient nature of the universe. The argument itself is a truism that time conquers all but Han Shan 'lives' (Stambler 13) it by highlighting the character *yu* (literally, yearning or to yearn) with a unique parallelism system in the poem.

First of all, there is a parallelism system overlapping the intrinsic framework of genre itself, i.e. *lüshi* (regulated verse),<sup>299</sup> the four couplets. It consists of three pairs of parallel constituents, overlapping the quatet of the genre: the head and the chin couplets, the two lines of neck couplet, and the two lines of tail couplet. In the first pair, the transient existence of peach blossoms parallels that of the human beings. They vaguely mirror each other without rigorous parallelism in syntax or grammar:

Head couplet:

Peach blossoms → their wish to outlive the summer → failure to withstand the time

Chin couplet:

People → wish to discover examples of longevity → finding none but what a mortal deserves

The contextual relation between them displays a lyrical narrative flow, loose and yet strung together, identifying human beings with peach blossoms implicitly. In the

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<sup>299</sup> I.e. 律詩. Basically, the two verses of either the first or the last couplet of the four couplets of regulated verse should not be parallel. Only the middle two are. Han Shan obviously has his own idea about how the structure should be.

third couplet, there is a contextual relation of different ambience. The poetry condenses dramatically under the concise parallelism in all syntax, grammar and semantics between the two lines, as shown below:

Line 5:	double temporal term	blossoms	“transforming” & “falling”
	▼	▼	▼
Line 6:	double temporal term (temporal adverb)	people (subject)	“moving” & “changing” (subject modifier/verb) <sup>300</sup>

From the GAP between the two parallel different styles, the poetic energy accumulates dramatically when the looser narrative style condenses into a poetics-compact structure. This further anticipates the conclusion: the transient nature of the world, echoing a reality that is divined from falling peach blossoms that yearn to outlive a summer. This contextual relation between the first and last couplets keeps the evolution in style dramatic and yet controlled—therefore aesthetically coherent.

Another parallel system elaborates across this structure to form a GAP that generates more resonance, and therefore, more nuances of aesthetic effect. In lines 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, each presents a contextual relation of time vs. its victim or the result of victimization: respectively, the summer vs. peach blossoms, morning vs. flower, year

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<sup>300</sup> In Chinese, the line between the two can be thin, like here.

vs. people, today vs. dust, past vs. sea. Read vertically across the line sequence, two imagery groups emerge in the latter half: one of time, i.e. day-year-today-past and the other of the fact and object of transience, i.e. transforming/falling- moving/changing-dust-sea. Each of them is vividly symbolized by the two counteracting constituents of the first line: the peach blossom symbolizes the fact and object of changing (be it the sea or the dust or fading or aging) and the passing summer can be a poetic equivalence to the damaging time of different length (be it a day, a year or all of history). Situated at the heart of this parallelism is, *yu*, yearning. A poestalt emerges from the GAP in these contextual relations: *yu*, pivoting the two parallelism systems in the poem, is the true commotion behind changing of things either as small as a flower or as large as the universe. It is the ground zero of the explosive poetic energy. This poestalt is thus emerging from the GAP's in the multi-parallelism of the poem, with which Stambler argues as the justification of the imagery importation.

Paz holds that "parallelism is the nucleus of the best Chinese poets and philosophers" (Weinberger 47). The art of parallelism, as Paz observes, is to keep "the unity that splits into duality [sic] to reunite and to divide again" (Weinberger 47). The yearning for life of the peach blossoms emerges as a poestalt upon the intertwining parallelisms with the character *yu* situated as the pivot. As English cannot create parallelism as effectively and accurately as Chinese, especially one like



that in the third couplet of the SP, Stambler resorts to an source alien to the SP, his personal life, and modulates it through a mechanism different from parallelism—i.e. foregrounding.

## How It Mingles

The sudden and powerful densification of prosody in Han Shan's third couplet, achieved by accurate parallelism, is rendered in the third stanza into an emotional description of an event in Stambler's personal life that carries a strong impact. Several substitute mechanisms are devised along with this seemingly extemporaneous shift to maintain organic contextual relations between this stanza and the rest of the translation, replacing the contextual relations between Han Shan's third couplet and its context.

Basically, Stambler's four stanzas are arranged into three groups, as the syntax shows, to correspond with the three groups of parallelism by Han Shan, instead of the genre of the SP, i.e. *lüshi*. As a prelude to this emotionally dramatic shift, Stambler does not arrange the kind of parallelism between the first two stanzas as Han Shan does in the first two couplets, but replaces the contextual relation of flexible parallelism by summing up the first two stanzas with the foregrounded last line of this group: "Not one wakes when a bough stirs." As remotely and subtly as in

the SP, it implies a comparison between peach blossoms and human beings.

“Shivering” and “paling,” two signs of the speedy transience of the blossoms under the ravages of time are both situated in foregrounded positions of their lines, the head and the end, corresponding with what the parallelism in the SP implies.

The balanced emphasis on peach blossoms and human beings by parallelism in the first couplet group in the SP has been replaced with their fusion in the last line of the first stanza group: ‘No one wakes when a bough stirs.’ This line, however, works more than combining the personified ‘yearning’ of the peach blossom and the unavoidable lifelessness of the deceased. With ‘No one wakes,’ the ancient are more than just the dead; they are also buried. This implication forms an imagery transfer, with which the funeral from the translator’s personal life merges into the translation without breakage in aesthetic coherence but still importing an emotional energy unrelated to the original poem. The foregrounded adjacency of ‘ashes’ and ‘dust’ situated at the end of lines 6 and 7 are highly significant. While “ashes” is reasonably the dust of the deceased, “dust” can be an aesthetically logical counterpart of the “ashes” of a dried sea—therefore a sea that has been dead. This contextual relation also helps the controversial cremation image to become a compact part into the context of ravaging time and, therefore, allows the emotional energy of the event to become a manifestation of the image of the yearning for life of the flower. In

addition, both of the second lines of the last two stanzas start with locational expressions: “In the fire” and “Where.” The foregrounded locational expressions at corresponding locations organically create another contextual relation upon the textual order: In the fire/ where once the greenest sea rolled. From the GAP here, an interpretation emerges that the fire of cremation, the very last flicker from life, still yearns to recall the source of life: the green sea.

It then becomes highly significant that two crucial positions of the latter half of the poem are occupied by “Leaves” at the beginning and “rolled” at the end. “Leaves” in its connotation corresponds to the image of “greenest sea” chromatically, kinetically and even metaphorically. And, situated in an even more foregrounded position of the two, the last syllable of the poem, “rolled” links all of the important images: the fallen petals, the breeze, the changing moon, the passing of generations, flames, ashes, feet that stumble, the immense sea, all of which roll. It even recalls the alternation of the two groups of images, the time and the changing facts/objects, in its counterpart in Han Shan. The mechanism of foregrounding, maneuvered by Stambler, recreates the poestalt of yearning for life, corresponding to what parallelism achieves in Han Shan.

Umberto Eco advances, “[A] translation can express an evident ‘deep’ sense of a text even by violating both lexical and referential faithfulness” (14). In this case,



it proves that it can also be true the other way round: the evident deep sense of the source text can be expressed in the translation even with violation in lexical and referential faithfulness. Stambler does this by introducing his personal event into his translation. Stambler's secret is recreating an aesthetic poestalt compatible with that of the SP through substituting foregrounding in the TP for parallelism in the SP. Of course, there are risks in the liberty Stambler takes in transfusing his personal life into translation for the sake of its emotional energy—even under Willis Barnstone's capacious guideline for poetry translation: "All ways are permissible provided they lead to the good poem" (50). Making shifts in poetry translation is like telling a beautiful lie: one has to make the "lying" parts somehow merge organically with the true parts and become a coherent story that shows the gestalt of truth. One of the points that are more relevant is that whether and how the TP can display a poestalt aesthetically compatible to that of the SP, as Stambler does in his "encounter with Cold Mountain."<sup>301</sup>

## As a Basis for Critical Comparison

As shown in the four Situations that may happen when recreating The Kanizsa Triangle, even when each and every constituent is reproduced, the gestalt

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<sup>301</sup> The title of the anthology of Han Shan, translated by by Stambler, also the source of this traslation.

may still suffer detriment or fail to show at all. Therefore, in a critical comparison, it is not enough to compare the constituents only. As how the constituents cohere with one another is crucial to the reproduction of the gestalt, the quality of this coherence in each reproduction becomes a pertinent locus for a critical comparison between them. Accordingly, in poetry translation, aesthetic coherence of each TP is also an important locus for critical comparison. This will be demonstrated here with a critical comparison of translations of Li Bai's<sup>302</sup> (701-62) "*Jingye Si*" (literally, "thoughts on a quiet night") by Herbert A. Giles, John Turner and Burton Watson.

## Poet's Moon

"*Jingye Si*", a five-character *jueju*, describes a night in one of the poet's travelling days: the poet wakes up on a night of full moon and mistakes the moonlight on the ground for frost; homesickness is aroused when realizing his mistake. The moon image occupies the pivot of the poem and functions as the catalyst of the poestalt among the contextual relations. With the interwoven structure of the patterns both innate in the genre and created by Li Bai, it deepens and intensifies emotion. As a result, a psychological coldness as well as a natural one happens in the GAP between the moon and frost, presenting an attack of

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<sup>302</sup> I.e. 李白.

homesickness over the poet in an unguarded drowsy status that becomes overwhelming. The poestalts resonate within the contextual relations of the poem to generate an aesthetic experience, which renders this universal human reaction a unique but touching presentation.

For illustrating what contextual relations there are and how they can achieve what is stated above, provided below are: 1) the transliteration, 2) a gloss on each character, and 3) the literal translation of each line of the title and the poem. The number at the end of each transliteration line is the line number of the ST:<sup>303</sup>

[the title]

1	<i>jing</i>	<i>ye</i>	<i>si</i>
2	quiet, tranquil	night	thoughts
3	Thoughts on a quiet night		

[the poem]

1	<i>chuang</i>	<i>qian</i>	<i>ming</i>	<i>yue</i>	<i>guang</i>	1
2	bed <sup>304</sup>	in front of	bright	moon	light	

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<sup>303</sup> The Chinese text is as follows:

靜夜思

牀前明月光  
疑是地上霜  
舉頭望明月  
低頭思故鄉。

(Jin, Tang 303)

The last two characters in line four, *gu xiang*, form a set term for “hometown” or “motherland” and therefore are glossed as a unit.

<sup>304</sup> There has been argument on what this *chuang* really is, which can mean both bed and, rather rarely, the curb around the well. Another *chuang* in Li Bai appears in his famous “The River Merchant’s Wife: A Letter” (i.e. 長干行) which was made one of the most famous classical Chinese poem by Ezra Pound’s translation. In both cases, there have been theories that the *chuang* should be curbs. However, beds were in the domestic furniture of the Tang dynasty [as the following source shows]



3 Before bed, there is bright moon light.

1	<i>yi</i>	<i>shi</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>shang</i>	<i>shuang</i>	2
2	to suspect	to be	ground	upon	frost	
3	I suspect it is frost on ground.					

1	<i>ju</i>	<i>tou</i>	<i>wang</i>	<i>ming</i>	<i>yue</i>	3
2	to lift	head	look at	bright	moon	
3	I look up to the bright moon.					

1	<i>di</i>	<i>tou</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>gu</i>	<i>xiang</i>	4
2	to lower	head	to think of	hometown		
3	I look down, missing hometown.					

There has been argument as to what genre this poem belongs. It was classified as a five-character *jueju* at least after *Wanshou Tangren Jueju*<sup>305</sup> (literally, “ten thousand *jueju*’s by Tang poets”) by Hong Mai<sup>306</sup> (c 1133 AD) of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279 AD). However, the poem does not fit into this catalogue perfectly. There is discrepancy in tonal pattern to the one conventionally observed in a *jueju*. In earlier anthologies such as in *Songben Yuefu Shiji* (a ballad anthology, edited in the Song Dynasty)<sup>307</sup> edited by Guo Maoqian<sup>308</sup> (960-1127 AD), it was classified as a short *yuefu*, i.e. ballad, which is free of fixed tonal pattern. In addition, the straightforward repetition of the character *tou* is also pointed out as falling short

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and there is no reason to exclude a much more popular and logical interpretation of the character, i.e. “a bed,” for a rare usage.

<sup>305</sup> I.e. 萬首唐人絕句.

<sup>306</sup> I.e. 洪邁.

<sup>307</sup> I.e. 宋本樂府詩集.

<sup>308</sup> I.e. 郭茂倩.

of the more deliberate wording in the convention of *jueju* (source). As it is rather unthinkable that a poet like Li Bai should be either ignorant of the proper tonal pattern of *jueju* or negligent of the possible variation of *shou* for *tou*, the text of the poem can be taken as what the poet meant it to be.<sup>309</sup>

The two halves of the poem contrast with each other in their syntactic structure, as shown below (the mark, ◆, means the conventional syntactic pause in a five character verse) :

The intricately structured first half:

<i>chuang</i>	<i>qian</i>	◆	<i>ming</i>	<i>yue</i>	<i>guang</i>	1
bed	before		bright	moon	light	
noun	adverb		adjective	noun	adjective/noun	
(adverb phrase)			(noun phrase as a topic)			
<i>yi</i>	<i>shi</i>	◆	<i>di</i>	<i>shang</i>	<i>shuang</i>	2
to suspect	to be		ground	upon	frost	
verb	verb/empty word		noun	adverb	noun	
(verb phrase)			(noun phrase as object)			

The accurately paralleled second half:

<i>ju</i>	<i>tou</i>	◆	<i>wang</i>	<i>ming</i>	<i>yue</i>	3
to lift	head		to look at	bright	moon	
<i>di</i>	<i>tou</i>	◆	<i>si</i>	<i>gu</i>	<i>xiang</i>	4
to lower	head		to think of	hometown		
verb	noun		verb	adjective	noun	
(verb phrase)			(verb phrase)			

<sup>309</sup> Since which genre this poem belongs to is still an open question, it may be argued that Li Bai fully exploited either the freedom in tonal pattern of *yuefu* or partial violation of the prosody of *jueju* to create his own version of quatrain. In either case, the mechanism that rederns the poem aesthetically effect is the same and can be explained by the framework advanced by this thesis.

These different contextual relations express two different states of mind and therefore renders a poestalt of a dramatic emotional end.

The first itself gives forth a poestalt compacted with hints, giving much more information than what is stated literally.<sup>310</sup> The bed (line 1) implies the person is sleeping and therefore a late hour. The frost (line 2) points to the temperature of the night. The suspect (line 2) hints that the person may have just woken from sleep and is still drowsy, for one would know whether there is frost on the ground with a quick glance if he had been awake all night. Since the moonlight is bright on the ground, it means the window was left open and the day is around the fifteenth of the month in the lunar calendar, the night of full moon. And, since the reflection is right in front of the bed, the bed is located very close to the window. It therefore can be reasonably inferred that the person probably was woken by the coldness coming in through the open window. Since he left the window open when he went to bed, the season is unlikely to be winter, but one when it is only cool in the evening, with frost expected—such as the autumn. This indirectly hints at the Moon Festival in

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<sup>310</sup> Ezra Pound offers an example of how to reveal rich implication in an economic wording when he analyzes “*Yujie Yuan*” 玉階怨 (A Complaint on the Jade Stairs) by Li Bai, also a five-character *jueju*. The twenty characters of the poem reads as follows: “jewel, stairs, covered, white, dew/ night, long, soaking, gauze, stocking/ return, drawing on, crystal, curtain/ clear [two characters for this meaning], gaze at, autumn, moon.” Pound interprets the in the following way: “Jewel stairs, therefore a palace. Grievance, therefore there is something to complain of. Gauze stockings, therefore a court lady, not a servant who complains. Clear autumn, therefore she has no excuse on account of weather. Also she has come early, for the dew has not merely whitened the stairs, but has soaked her stockings. The poem is especially prized because she utters no direct reproach” (Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems* 132). In fact, the whether should offer an unmentioned *him*, supposedly the lover of the lady, no excuse for his absence.



mid-autumn, which is on one of the full moons in autumn—a festival when a traveler aspires to and is expected to return home to his family.<sup>311</sup> After reading the latter half, one can even argue that the person may have woken from a dream of his homeland. In contrast, the second half is specific and direct. Two concrete and simple physical movements—raising and lowering the head (in line 3 and 4 respectively); two specific focuses—the moon in the sky and his homesickness. The drastic change in style generates a poestalt of the sudden and overwhelming descent of homesickness on the poet.

The contextual relations in the tonal pattern of this poem also function as a GAP that offsets the poestalts. Those of the first and the last lines are identical, while the second and third are complementary except in their middle characters. The former arrangement reinforces the parallel relationship between the moon light before the bed and the fact that the poet sinks into homesickness. The location of the moonlight, i.e. “before the bed,” endows Li Bai’s homesick moon a nuance of its own that makes it stand out from the general homesick association of the moon imagery. His is a moon that wakes a traveler from dreams and leaves him sleepless and drowned in reminiscences of homeland. The latter arrangement dramatizes the change from the intricate process of wakening from sleep and realizing his mistake to

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<sup>311</sup> In fact the Chinese expression for “all of the family members unite at home,” *hejia tuanyuan* 闔家團圓 literally means “all of the family members gather and form a full circle”—like the full moon.

the simple yet heart-breaking homesickness. The complementarity in tonal pattern at the middle characters of each line is not observed here, i.e. *di* in the second line and *wang* in the third. They are foregrounded because of their tonal identicalness in tonally complimentary lines and their position as the centres of the whole poem.

Together, they form the pivot of the contextual relations in the poem in several ways. Firstly, they function as a pivot of the movement of the poet's attention, i.e. the poet looks up from the ground to the sky, from near by location to somewhere distant. Secondly, they work as a switch for the psychological change from dormant serenity to emotional yearning. Between the two, *wang* is more important since it serves also as the axle of both the physical environment and the psychological status by rhyming with all the important images in the poem, including *chuang* (the bed) where the yearning starts and develops, *guang* ([the moon] light) which triggers that emotion, *shuang* (the frost) that defines the psychological temperature of poet's present status, *xiang* (hometown) which the poet is yearning for in his mind.

The GAP in another tonal contextual relation creates a poestalt of irony that endows the moon image with more aesthetic potential. The noun-phrases, *yue guang* (moonlight) at the end of line 1 and *gu xiang* (homeland) at the end of line 4, shares the same tonal pattern, i.e. harsh-level. This identity in quality between the two terms manifests the propensity of the association of the two. Now he is far away

from homeland, the only thing almost home within his reach is the moon in the sky. Auditorily, it is hinted that the moon is, to him, his homeland. The irony is that the homeland is as unreachable as the moon herself. This irony is subtly hinted at early in the first character of the title, *jing*, which contains the character for the moon, *yue* 月, and reads in harsh tone as well like the character for the moon. Though the clear night of full moon can be a typical embodiment of tranquility, one of the denotations of *jing*,<sup>312</sup> this is here ironically the cause of the desperate homesickness in the poet that renders tranquility impossible. On a cloudy night, the poet might just have slept through in undisturbed darkness.

In addition, a quality of Chinese character renders *yue* an aesthetically resourceful constituent in forming organic contextual relations. The character for the moon, *yue*, can stay independent while forming with another character a bi-character phrase such as *ming yue* (bright moon) since the two are only adjacent to each other instead of being connected as shown in transliteration. It can also be grafted onto other characters such as *ming* 明 (lines 1 and 3), *wang* 望 (line 3) and *jing* 靜 (in title).<sup>313</sup> As a result, there are six *yue*'s in the poem. The large number in a comparatively small space of twenty characters emphasizes the foregrounding. It becomes more significant that the character appears only in lines 1 and 3, which are

<sup>312</sup> A list of definitions from some of the most authoritative dictionaries. 三民, 正中, 辭海 et etc.

<sup>313</sup> The character for the moon, 月, appears as a radical at the right side in 明, at the up-right side of 望 and the one at the lower-left side of 靜.



about the outside world, and is absent in lines 2 and 4, where the focus is on the psychological reaction of the poet to the moon: a parallelism between the moon and the emotion of the poet.

The language of the poem is of everyday conversational register. The second couplet almost pushes the parallel accuracy over border into redundancy by repeating *tou*. However, the repetition can be aesthetically justified when aesthetic coherence is considered. The two contrast postures are compactly connected by this repetition and foreground the unreachability of the homeland. It can be argued that the first *tou*, which is flat tone, should be replaced by *shou*, which is a more literary expression for “the head” and is slanted tone so as to conform more with the tonal pattern of *jueju* much closer. This however creates a rather literary emphasis, which is less natural than colloquially repeating *tou*, and aesthetically less coherent.

## Comparing Translators’s Moons

In the following TP’s, the moon imagery forms different contextual relations with its context and produces GAP’s of different aesthetic effect. Each produces different poestalts in their different attempts. An examination of their aesthetic coherence provides a relevant basis for the comparison.

Night Thoughts<sup>314</sup>

I wake, and moonbeams play around my bed,  
 Glittering like hoar-frost to my wandering eyes; 2  
 Up towards the glorious moon I raise my head,  
 Then lay me down—and thoughts of home arise. 4

(Giles, *Gems* 329)*Night Thoughts*

As by my bed  
 The moon did beam, 2  
 It seemed as if with frost the earth were spread.  
 But soft I raise 4  
 My head, to gaze  
 At the fair moon. And now, 6  
 With head bent low,  
 Of home I dream.<sup>315</sup> 8

(Turner, *Golden Treasure* 121)

## Still Night Thoughts

Moonlight in front of my bed—  
 I took it for the frost on the ground! 2  
 I lift my eyes to watch the mountain moon,  
 lower them and dream of home. 4

(Watson, *Chinese Poetry* 210)

Among the three translations, Giles's, the earliest, was translated before 1923 as the publishing date shows. Giles, believing that poetry should be translated into poetry (Giles, *Gem* 289), adopts a rhyming scheme and a metric pattern similar to iambic pentameter.<sup>316</sup> Turner also holds, "...my intention is to make the translation of a poem to read like a poem itself. ... [Prose translation] misses the point and soul and

<sup>314</sup> There are two versions of the title, one of which is "ye si" (night thoughts), without *jing*.

<sup>315</sup> The uneven layout is Turner's.

<sup>316</sup> This of course implies the limit in Giles's concept of what makes poetry poetry.

reason of a poem, its specific beauty” (Turner, *Golden Treasure* 10). Turner, unlike Giles, frees his translations from the line-by-line corresponding strategy here although he claims, “I do not comply with the modern fashion of putting Chinese verse into line by line prose, or into unmeasured sprung rhythm, which is the same thing” (Turner, *Golden Treasure* 10). Compared with Turner, Watson frees the creativity in poetry translation even further. He agrees with David Lattimore that “classical Chinese poetry was only successfully translated into English when [12] the translators were willing to set aside the rhymes and metres of traditional English verse, as well as Western concepts of what constitutes poetic diction and subject matter, and create a freer form that would permit the power and expressiveness of the originals to shine through” (Watson, *Chinese Poetry* 12-3). As a post-Pound translator, Watson insists, “My belief is that all types of innovation and experiment are to be welcomed, for from them hopefully will evolve even more effective methods for bringing the beauties of Chinese poetry over into English” (Watson, *Chinese Poetry* 13).

Besides examining the differences caused by their different strategies, it is more important to examine whether and how the poetals emerges from the TP’s. Giles manages to imitate the textual form of the SP and deals with the SP line by line. The translation is composed of four lines of similar length, with two to three



syllables for one character. It also contains two separate syntactic units as the SP, each of which contains two lines, with the first two as one and the latter as the other. It has a rhyme scheme as the SP, though a different one, i.e. *abab* instead of *aaba* of SP. For the tonal pattern in the SP, a loosely metric pattern is substituted to correspond with it. The first and the last lines are both iambic pentameter, while the second and the third lines share another metric pattern that contains twelve syllables with about four to five stresses in about every three to four syllables without particular pattern. Semantically, the meaning of each line in the SP is rendered accurately into their corresponding line in the TT: e.g. in line 1, “moonbeam” for *yue guang*, “bed” for *chuang* “around” for *chian*; in line 2, “hoar-frost” for *shuang*; in line 3, “I raise my head” for *ju tou*, “glorious moon” for *ming yue*; and, “lay me down” for *di tou*, “thoughts” for *si*, “home” for *gu xiang*. However, with these efforts to transfer the form of the SP, Giles fails to achieve the poestalt one reads in the SP because the contextual relations one can read in his translation neither help to offset the image of moon nor interact with it to generate poestalt.

In criticizing the translation of the moon image in Giles, comparing the number of appearances can be an approach. The character for moon in Chinese appears six times in the SP and its counterpart in the TP only appears twice in lines 1 and 3. However, this is not a relevant criticism and tells little. It is necessary to look

into the contextual relations it forms in both. While the character for moon in Chinese appears either by itself or included in other characters at foregrounded points, its counterpart in the TP is buried deep inside the line<sup>317</sup> instead of at the highlighting positions such as the two ends of the line. To aggravate the problem, the first “moon” in line one is blurred with five letters dangling behind, i.e. “-beams.” The second “moon” in line three is in an even more unfavorable situation. Semantically, it is brightened up by the joyous connotation of its epithet, “glorious.” Auditorily, it is nearly silenced by the noise from this epithet’s three syllables that contain four different consonants—a velar plosive of /g/, a lateral liquid /l/, a retroflex liquid /r/ and a sibilant /s/. Both bring detriments to its association to homesickness, i.e. they are aesthetically incoherent, and its function as the cause and source of this emotion.

Turner, in contrast to Giles, does not try to transfer the textual form of the SP, i.e. a rhymed metric quatrain. Neither does he try to resort to a similar number of moons as Giles does. Instead, he adopts free verse and constructs contextual relations with a phonetic devices and a rhythmic system that contain viable GAP’s. Firstly, the two bi-iambic lines, i.e. lines 2 and 8, with four /m/’s on stressed syllables stand out,

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<sup>317</sup> The first has three and six syllable on either side and the second, seven and five. In a roughly pentametric format, this is close to the middle. While in Turner, the first one is braced by one and two syllable on either side and the other, by two and three. Even in sheer visual effect, the “moon” is Turner is more obvious than Giles.

echoing each other. In line 2, the /m/'s in "moon" and "beam" is carried on in the "seemed" in the next line to continue a contextual relation that implies the cause-and-effect relationship. This string of /m/'s is echoed in line 8, with one lingering at the end, i.e. the /m/ in "dream." With this, homesickness and the moon imagery are arranged into an aesthetically effective GAP. In addition, the significance of the echoes between "moon" and the following words, "home" "dream" and "beam," is also highlighted as their counterparts in the SP, though in different contextual relations—the former with stressed positions and the latter with the number of appearance and foregrounded positions in a line.

The /m/ in Turner's translation are forming more aesthetically effective contextual relations than Giles.<sup>318</sup> Six of Turner's seven /m/'s happen in stressed words, forming a powerful resonance with the imagery of "moon." In contrast, only four of Giles are on stressed words and the rest are dimmed since they are situated in unstressed words. As a result, they contribute much less to resonating with the "m" in "moon" than those in Turner.

In the SP, the tonal complementariness between the middle two lines aesthetically relates the moonlight on the ground by bedside and the homesickness

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<sup>318</sup> Turner uses seven /m/'s in his translation and Giles, eight. The seven /m/'s of Turner are situated in "my" in line 1, "moon" in lines 2 and 6, "beam" in line 2 "seemed" in line 3 and "home" and "dream" in line 8, among which all of them are in stressed word except "my" in line 1. The eight /m/'s in Giles are situated in "moonbeams" in line one, "my"'s in lines one, two and three, "moon" in line 3 and "me" and "home" in line 4, among which four of them are on unstressed words, "my" in lines 1, 2 and 3 and "me" in line 4.



aroused in the poet. This contextual relation is a crucial element that forms the poestalt that embodies poet's emotional change. In Turner, this contextual relation is replaced with a set of rhythmic contextual relations: the recurrence and variation of a bi-iambic line. This metric structure starts the TP with "as by/ my bed" and sounds sonorously in line 2 significantly on the core imagery of the poem, "The moon did beam."<sup>319</sup> It then recurs from lines 4 to 5, "But soft I raise/ My head, to gaze." In the four iambs here, there is a crescendo. The stressed word becomes more prominent as the difference in the semantic and grammatical substantiality between the unstressed and stressed syllables in each foot increases. In the first, the adverb modifying the poet's movement barely outweighs the strong contrastive connector. In the second, the action sounds distinctively louder than the pronoun. In the third, the possessive of the body part is barely necessary. In the last, the unstressed part in the iamb becomes only an empty word, "to," while the verb "gaze" takes up a dominant proportion of the substantiality of the foot. This arrangement forms a GAP that put forth a poestalt, an embodiment of the emotional transition of the poet from unwitting drowsiness to having his attention focused on the moon in the situation.

After the poet realizes it is moonlight, there is a drastic psychological twist in him: with the puzzle cleared away, an overwhelming homesickness descends on him

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<sup>319</sup> One of the feet on the first line is empty word, "by," while the feet of the second line are both grammatically substantial and key image, "moon" or related one, "beam." As a result, the latter are more sonorous.

unexpectedly. The metric changes before and after the caesura at line 6 are the contextual relations that form this GAP here. The poet's emotional reaction emerges like the non-existent triangle in The Kanizsa Triangle. The distinct pacing rhythm in the iambs discussed above staggers into an anapest in line 6, "at the fair," and halts to a full stop at "moon," whose significance is further reinforced with a caesura following up. The poet's mind seems to freeze in agony at the pause when he suddenly realizes how lonely he is, far away from family and home. Then he manages to recover from this overwhelming homesickness, hardly able to regain tranquility in mind, with a weak iamb, "and now,"<sup>320</sup> that seems meant to pick up the former rhythm but is so weak that sounds more like a pyrrhic. In this GAP here, the poet's portrait of a person who struggles to pick himself up emerges. The poet cannot retain a peaceful state of mind now that there is no way of avoiding the overpowering reminder of home, the moon. The poem moves on with an iamb, "with head," continuing the attempt to regain the former state of mind and only to fall back to "low" status at an unstressed syllable in the trochee, "bent low," which eye-rhymes with the hesitant temporal phrase, "And now," in the preceding line, hinting the present emotional status of the poet. Then in the last line, the poet gives in and sinks into homesickness with another two recurring iambs, "of home I dream," which not

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<sup>320</sup> Weak in comparison to other iambs in line 2, "the moon," "did beam," where the difference in the stress of the stressed and unstressed parts is more dramatic as explained earlier.

only rhymes across the poem with the “beam” in line 2 but also echoes the metric pattern of the same line to foreground the relation between the bright moonlight and the poet’s homesickness. The emotion thus accumulates auditorily and releases its aesthetic energy at the climatic end. In a word, though the word “moon” may appear only twice in Turner’s translation, much less often than in the ST, the imagery is tightly embedded into the translation through a complicated contextual relation of phonetic device and a rhythmic system. The overall poestalt of this TP echoes the one the SP, which achieves its through contextual relations that integrate moon imagery differently.

However, there can be two translational decisions by Turner that border on becoming problematic as they cause aesthetical incoherence in the translation. Firstly, the third line of Turner’s translation could be the most problematic part in his rendition. It is so not because it does not correspond textually to its counterpart in the ST, *yi shi di shang shuang*, but because it is aesthetically incoherent with the rest of the TP and therefore cause detriment to the poestalt that the whole of translation. The five iambic metres form a mechanical march that is both monotonous and imposing, differing from its sophisticated and reserved context. It might be more than simple coincidence that Giles argues that most readings of the poem are erroneous by over-emphasizing the moon. He advances, “It was written when the poet was exiled



in South China, where frost is rarely seen. It is the semblance of frost rather than the moon that reminds him of his Northern home" (Turner, *Golden Treasure* 322). While his historical research on the background of the poem and his inference about the poet's emotional reaction to the semblance of the frost are both open-ended issues, the way he renders this line does not help make frost as the centripetal image of the poem, except burying it at the centre of a long line. Secondly, the "fair" in line 6 can be redundant under this point of view. With it deleted, the "moon" becomes the foot of the anapest instead and the line becomes "At the moon. And now,/ ..." Thus, the aesthetic function of the anapest stated above now fuses with the moon imagery system even more cohesively, making the GAP there more powerful for being terser.

In the TP by Burton Watson, the poestalt emerges mainly from the GAP's composed of contextual relations of foregrounding parallelism and cross-rhyming. To correspond to the GAP in the SP formed by the relationship between the moon and homesickness, Watson foregrounds the relationship by placing key words like "moon" and "home," at significant points in the TP. The two moons in Watson are placed at the head of the poem and the end of line 3. Both form powerful parallelism with an equally important "home," which is situated at the end of the last line of the TT. From the parallelism between the "moon" that starts the scenario in the poem at

line 1 and the “home” that ends the TP, the implication emerges that the former is cause of the latter, homesickness in the poet. The closer parallelism, the one between the “moon” at the end of line 3 and this “home,” hinting that the moon is fueling the emotion, further reinforcing the relationship between this celestial body and the emotion in question.

A comparison of how *chian* (literally, “by,” “before” or “in front of”), the second character in the first line of the SP, is rendered in the three TP’s offers a showcase for the significance of a critical comparison based on the concepts of contextual relation and poestalt. It is rendered into “in front of” in Watson and forms a audial contextual relation that echoes its counterpart in the ST. “In front of” of line 1 and “frost on the ground” of line 2 subtly parallel with rearranged assemblages of /fr/, /r/, /n/, /t/, /o/. This contextual relation echoes the intricate echoes of /ch/, /sh/, /an/ and /ang/ between *chuang chian* (literally, “bed, before”) and *di shang shuang* (literally, “upon, frost”) in the corresponding lines of the ST. In both the SP and TP these audial effects themselves are effective GAP’s for poestalt to emerge.

Both Giles and Turner adopt the shorter “by” instead of the longer, more prone to the danger of wordiness, “in front of” that Watson chooses. The choice of Watson is a better in his TP because the by’s of either Giles’s or Turner’s fail to create the same resonance with “frost” and their contexts. Though it may be

semantically acceptable to adopt “before” for “in front of,” the poestalt will be compromised due to its deficiency in audial effect.

Of the number and the location of the translation for *yue* in the TP’s, it proves more enlightening to examine the differences in these three translations through the concepts of GAP and aesthetic coherence, as show below. Both Watson and Turner use two moons in the translation and both replace *si* (i.e. “to think”) the action in line four of the SP, with “to dream” and both narrow down its object to “home,” instead of *gu xiang* (i.e. “hometown or homeland”). The differences of the aesthetic effect they achieve does not show if the criticism stops here. Furthermore, as Turner’s two moons are situated inside the block of the text, one at the second word in line 2 and one at the fourth place at line six, it may seem valid to argue that, in contrast, Watson arranges the moon imagery more effectively by situating one at the beginning of the whole translation and one at the end of the third—both are already foregrounded in their mere location. This argument does not stand when one fails to appreciate Turner’s translation through the metric device that he designs, as discussed above.

Both Giles and Watson adopt quatrain for their translation, but compared with Watson’s, Giles’s seems verbose and flowery. Giles use forty-four syllables in thirty-three words while Watson uses only thirty-two syllables in thirty words. Giles applies set epithets like “glittering” for frost, “wandering” for eyes and “glorious” for



the moon while Watson uses none in their counterparts except in “mountain moon.”<sup>321</sup> To be fair, the verbosity and the floweriness of Giles’s style and the underlying iambic metric pattern<sup>322</sup> may be explained by the late Victorian norm of verse in his literary background, but, a more relevant criticism points out that the key image of the SP, the moon, is not an element as important in his TP since no contextual relations that form GAP out of it. Turner and Watson use different approaches to recreate the poestalt in the SP related to this image. The former tailors a phonetic device and a rhythmic system and the latter interweaves a foregrounding parallelism and cross-rhyming devices. The devices of both translators are aesthetically effective also because the choices they make cohere aesthetically.

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<sup>321</sup> In the version included in *Quan Tang Shi*, the third line is *ju tou wang shan yue*, i.e. 舉頭望山月. See *Quan Tang Shi* 390.

<sup>322</sup> In his lines 1 and 4, it is fully, almost mechanically, observed and thus decides the wording.

## VI. On Creative Involvement

### More Than Changing Angles

#### The Approach for Aesthetic Potential

To view a figure like Figure 1 provided below, one may starts with this direction:

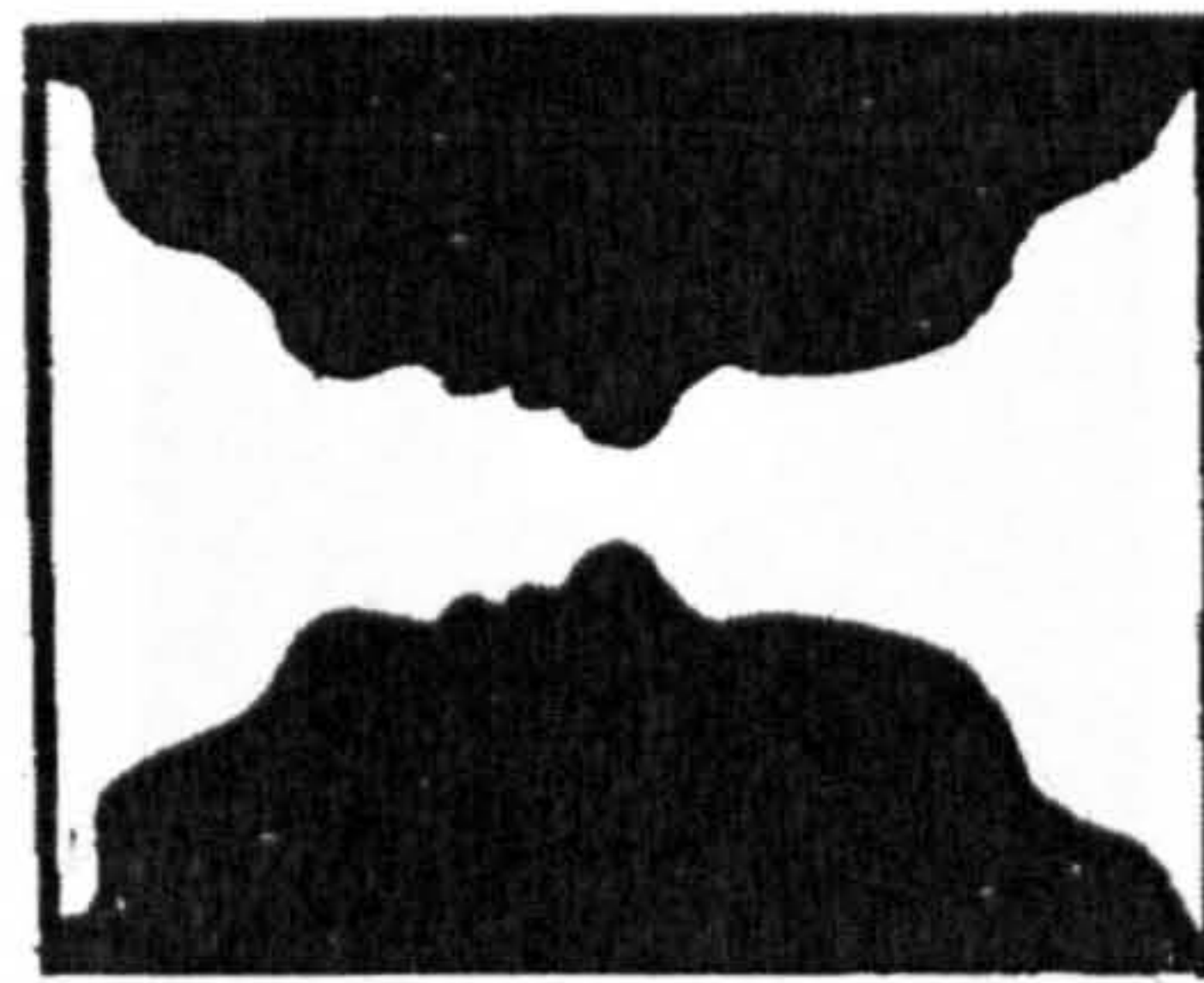


Figure 1.

It seems to be a duo-tone picture of scenery, the dark areas above and below become the night sky and the water. The observation does not stop here. The viewer may choose to appreciate it in the following way. The white waving stripe that is vertically symmetric can be seen as either mountainous or forested landscape surrounding a water area with the reflection. As the stripe becomes narrow at the centre, it can be seen as a hint of distance. This narrowest section at the middle may be seen as the farthest point from the viewer and imply a distance of vast space in the



central area of the figure. The vertical lateral sides of the frame where the white stripe stretches wider and wider outside the frame at the four corners hints at the vicinity to the viewer. The water area can be either a river stretching away into the horizon with viewer on a boat or a lake with viewer on the lakeshore. As the part for the sky and its reflection on water is dark, a temporal interpretation of nighttime becomes legitimate.

Viewed from another direction, as shown here in Figure 2:

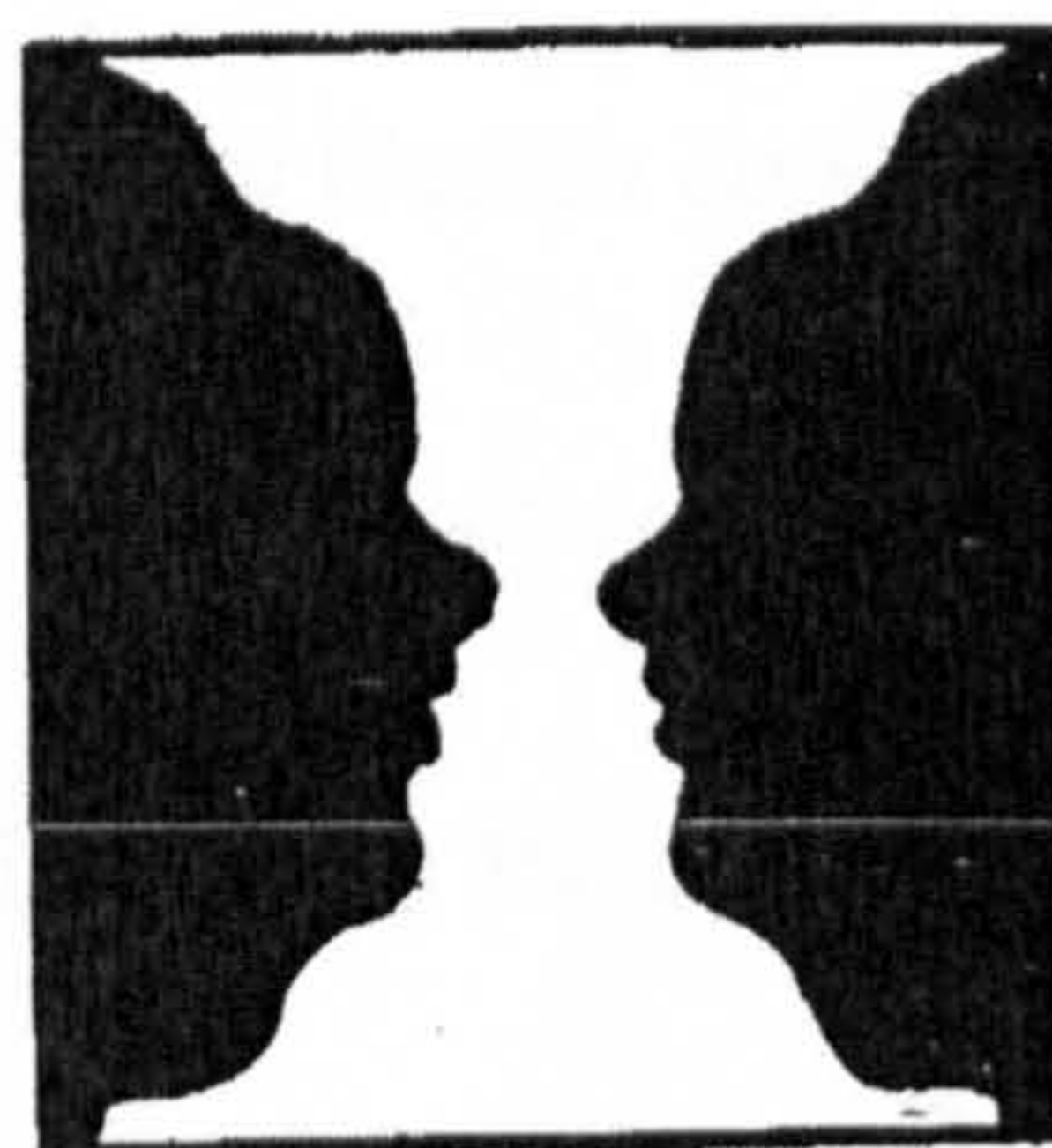


Figure 2.

it turns into something different. The scenery disappears and is replaced by another phenomenon. It displays either a white vase in front of a dark background or two black faces facing each other with empty space in between.<sup>323</sup> Some may see the two faces and the vase alternating each other. Some may see only one and need to be

<sup>323</sup> In the case of sight, human eyes tends to find a meaningful form, i.e. the figure, as the focus of sight and let the rest of the elements in sight fall back as a background, i.e. the field. However, this is not a stable or fixed relationship. The two entities may interact and switch into each other's status when the original figure becomes the field while the field becomes the figure. For a situation where more than two entities are involved, they may merge and end in new figure-field relationship.



informed about the other to see it. Furthermore, to view the figure as two faces facing each other is only the beginning of the interpretation starting from this approach.

Their vicinity may imply an impending kiss.<sup>324</sup> This interpretation may also be combined with the angle adopted in Figure 1 and the two-face interpretation may gain different connotation. While Figure 2, with the vertical posture, may imply one of social etiquette, e.g. a greeting kiss, Figure 1, with the horizontal posture, may even imply an erotic context, e.g. one in foreplay.

In fact, this is a duplication of THE Rubin Vase,<sup>325</sup> which has been one of the most expressive presentations for the Gestalt concept of the interaction and alternation between a visual ground and an apparent figure. The thesis deliberately disregards its original purpose in Gestalt Psychology and starts with a new approach to “recreate” the figure so as to foreground the potential of the creativity in the choosing of an approach. The thesis will term this kind of choice as an Approach for Aesthetic Potential (as AAP hereafter). Very different stories may start from this same figure through different AAP’s.

Whether one sees in the figure a scene, a vase, two faces, or anything at all, there is an apparent necessary condition, i.e. the existence of similarity to that thing.

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<sup>324</sup> The interpretation of kiss is the contribution of Professor Susan Bassnett. She mentioned in a letter to the author of the thesis: “when you look at figure one, there is still a case for arguing that there are two faces, indeed that in this case there is a possible erotic quality because the one appears to be looking down to perhaps kiss the other.”

<sup>325</sup> This version here is produced by the author. It was first brought up by the Danish psychologist Edgar Rubin in early twentieth century. See other versions in Appendix 3.

However, when there is ambiguity, as is the case here, the necessary conditions cannot explain why one choice should occur to a viewer first or why some interpretation occurs to some viewers and not others. Personal and cultural backgrounds can be two possible reasons and both may exert their influences either consciously or subconsciously. For example, it does not seem to be a coincidence that the author of this thesis, a Taiwanese Chinese, should bring up the scenery association here. A popular name for topography in Chinese community is “Guan Yin” (aka Avalokiteshvara), one of the goddesses most worshiped by Chinese, because they see the silhouette of her face emerging from horizon in topography. There are several mountains here in Taiwan alone called “Guan Yin Mountain,” not to mention those out there in other Chinese communities. So, the face figure may be related to topography naturally in a person with this background.

The point here is that what the figure offers is identical—the same shapes on paper. It is the approach the viewer adopts, i.e. an AAP, and what it may entail that makes it different. One can always construct a new AAP to see whether a new gestalt emerges from the original elements. In short, the duo-toned scenery along with other gestalts in The Rubin Vase, each is a different unity of the work and the viewer. “This unity,” as Dufrenne puts it, “is not a new form which has been added to those we have already discerned. It is rather a new viewpoint of the object” (Dufrenne 143).

To see the duo-tone scenery, no selection or neglect of the constituents of the figure is involved but just a AAP. One simply needs to venture a creative turn in perception to see a new world.

The thesis avoids the expression of “choosing an approach” because “choosing” implies deciding among a number of limited, clear-cut choices that have already existed. In choosing, the chooser has no influence upon the chosen except deciding to adopt one and give up the others and therefore there is not much room to express his/her creativity. In poetry reading/translating, settling down upon an approach can be more creative than just choosing one. It may start with selecting a starting point but then a series of aesthetic decision will follow. Furthermore, it can also be creative through being unprecedented as the first way to view The Rubin Vase demonstrated above.

In addition, any approach one adopts to read a poem can be more complicated than just a choice of angle to look at the object. To choose an approach when appreciating the Grand Canyon, one needs only to choose one of the pay telescope sets at the spot where you think the view is better than other choices. To choose an approach when reading a poem, one may need to find a right angle to start with and, metaphorically, to make a suitable “telescope” specifically for reading the poem in question, i.e. a tailored appreciating system for the poem. It is not that the telescope



will be completely different from those we use to “view” another poem. It is that there will be some parts in it that are useful or a certain assortment of parts specifically for that certain poem viewed. A new AAP, no matter whether it possesses a groundbreaking change or just a subtle shift, may bring out a new gestalt from a figure or a poestalt from a poem and endows it with a new life. As Ezra Pound advances, “literature is news that STAYS news” (Pound 29). It stays new only when new approaches, or AAP’s, keep coming up.

## Another Way to Look at “Q”

“Q,” discussed earlier, is adopted again as the object for investigation. The reason why this thesis recycles an example utilized earlier instead of adopting a new one is to highlight the significance of what a different AAP can bring into the interpretation of a poem.

Despite the absence of syntax, each line in “Q” still contains one to many semantic possibilities, as shown earlier. When a reader chooses one from each pool randomly and puts them together, the result may be what is shown here:

Q:	the seventeenth letter in the English alphabet
Kew:	the name of the area of the London borough of Richmond upon Thames, where the Royal Botanical Garden is situated

Queue:	hair tied back
Cue:	a prompt for an actor to begin
Q:	the seventeenth letter in the English alphabet
Coo:	an exclamation of surprise

Without starting with any AAP, this reading presents a picture in a condition like Situation II of the reproduced Kanisza Triangle in the last chapter: each line may be translated not incorrectly but they are meaningless put together since they are not modulated with any kind of AAP. The GAP viewed from this light is a gap of aesthetic effect. A new AAP may be a creative move, but for it to work aesthetically, one needs to furnish it with more infrastructures, which means more sophistication than a simple angle, and therefore more involvement of creativity. In this case, the reader needs to modulate the interpretations of each lines for more contextual relations that form GAP's. At a certain point of this process, "in their whole multiplicity they lead to a peculiar polyphony of aesthetically valiant qualities which determines the quality of the value constituted in the work"<sup>326</sup> (Ingarden, *Cognition* 13)—a unique poestalt emerges and the rest of the alternatives fade—at least for the moment.

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<sup>326</sup> "They" are referring to the strata of a literary work that have their own positive values. Ingarden argues, "These are valuable qualities of two kinds: those artistic and those of aesthetic value. The latter are present in the work of art itself in a peculiar potential state" (Ingarden, *Cognition* 13).

Reading does not happen in a vacuum of randomness. Besides reading as context with what the poem is situated, one can also argue that the association of the form of the poem by itself may be a relevant constituent. The earlier AAP of "Q" treats the poem as an alphabet poem since it is one of twenty-six poems each of which deals with an alphabet. However, when "Q" is read with an AAP that takes a semantic angle and then with another AAP, that its briefness resembles that of a telegram, a set of meanings hinting at the contents of a telegram becomes prominent: a person's name (line 1), a location (line 2), an instruction (line 3), an object (line 4), a person's name (line 5) and an intimate interjection a person's name (line 7).<sup>327</sup> Its appearance changes from an alphabetic arrangement to a telegraphic message, just as the Rubin Vase changes into a duo-tone scenery picture. From the GAP among these constituents viewed from the new AAP, an aesthetic effect may emerge: a story about a rendezvous, for example.

The story is not told explicitly, just as the two triangles in The Kanizsa Triangle are non-existent on the page. The semantic obscurity of the text gives way to the story of which this GAP is potential, catalyzed by the creativity of the reader, as the two triangles emerging from the constituents in the diagram of The Kanizsa

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<sup>327</sup> There is an imminent issue here, i.e. whether the telegram theory, the subjective input of the reader, makes the poem look more telegraphic, for the poem itself is not a telegram after all. In other words, where is the line that marks the beginning of purely arbitrary fabrication? The thesis argues that there can be no reading without subjective input but it is beyond the ambition and scope of the thesis to investigate where this line should be or whether it exists at all.



Triangle, catalyzed by the gestalt faculty of the viewer. A certain Q is instructed to go to a certain place to wait for a message from another Q, and a romantic scenario, judged from the last line. If this reading is put down on page at this stage,<sup>328</sup>

The SP	The meanings which form a more logical combination	The reading	A provisional Chinese literal translation in transliteration
Q	the initial of a person's name	A certain Mr./Ms. Qiu	<i>Qiu mou mou</i> <sup>329</sup>
Kew	The name of the area in the London borough of Richmond upon Thames, where the Royal Botanical Garden is situated.	Kew where the Royal Botanic Garden is situated	<i>Huangjia zhiwuyan suozai de qiuzhen</i> <sup>330</sup>
Queue	a group of people lining up;	People queuing up in one line	<i>Zai renqun paichen yilie chu</i> <sup>331</sup>
Cue	a signal to begin an action;	There is a signal for action for you	<i>You xinxi gei ni</i> <sup>332</sup>
Q	the initial of a person's name	Mr./Ms. Qiu	<i>Qiu mou mou</i> <sup>333</sup>
[a blank line]			
Coo!	Making a low soft	Love you!	<i>Qinqin wode ai!</i> <sup>334</sup>

<sup>328</sup> The order of these items from left to right means to show how the reading of the SP goes from the original text through different stages of interpretation to arrive at a translation. In the following table, the Chinese character of the translation is provided to offer a better comparison. The last two columns here works as assistance for the understanding of the TP. The grid line is kept here to indicate it status as a provisional step.

<sup>329</sup> I.e. 邱某某.

<sup>330</sup> I.e. 皇家植物園所在的萩鎮.

<sup>331</sup> I.e. 在人群排成一列處.

<sup>332</sup> I.e. 有信息給你.

<sup>333</sup> I.e. 邱某某.

	sound sometimes fatuously often in showing affection or pleasure or in seeking to placate,		
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it will be in a condition like Situation I of the reproduced Kanisza Triangle in the last chapter: the poetic intention is vaguely seen but the constituents are not put in an aesthetically effective way. As is described in the metaphor stated earlier, this approach needs to be more sophisticated than reading “Q” literally as a telegram. The original text interweaves a textual arrangement, i.e. a textual block in triangular form, and a phonetic repetition with this semantic façade in a telegram-like form. The modulation to encompass all these factors with the new AAP in a new TP involves another type of creativity the following section will investigate further. For the moment, this following translation proffers a sample of the result,

The SP	The TP <sup>335</sup>	The transliteration of the TP	The literal translation of the TP
Q	秋	<i>qiu</i>	Qiu
Kew	萩園	<i>qiu yuan</i>	Kew gardens
Queue	排隊處	<i>pai dui chu</i>	Where people queue
Cue	有信	<i>you xin</i>	Have message
Q	秋	<i>qui</i>	Qiu
Coo!	愛你！	<i>ai ni !</i>	Love you!

<sup>334</sup> I.e. 親親我的愛！

<sup>335</sup> For a direct comparison of visual effect, the Chinese characters are left in the main text there.

The criterion that modulates the size of each line in the TP changes from the number of stroke to that of character, a result of taking in the semantic side of the poem that changes the mechanism to maintain aesthetic coherence here. In the meanwhile, as many /i/'s and /ju/'s are adopted to create a more homogenous voice quality to imitate that of the SP. The character 萩 is adopted not only for its pronunciation that repeats lines 1 and 5 as in the SP but also for the repetition of the radical 秋 to create part of the lexical repetition in the SP. A comparison of the SP, the TP and the provisional translation,

From the SP	Through the provisional literal translation	To the transliteration
Q	<i>Qiu mou mou</i>	<i>qiu</i>
Kew	<i>Huangjia zhiwuyouan suozai de qiuyuan</i>	<i>qiu yuan</i>
Queue	<i>Zai renqun paichen yiliechu</i>	<i>pai dui chu</i>
Cue	<i>You xinxi gaine</i>	<i>you xin</i>
Q	<i>Qiu mou mou</i>	<i>qui</i>
Coo!	<i>Qinqin wode ai!</i>	<i>ai ni !</i>

will show the result of the mediation with concept of GAP and aesthetic coherence in the picture.

In a sense, the SP and its interpretation are possible only when the very few words that pronounced as /kju:/ to include a location name, Kew, and an action, i.e.

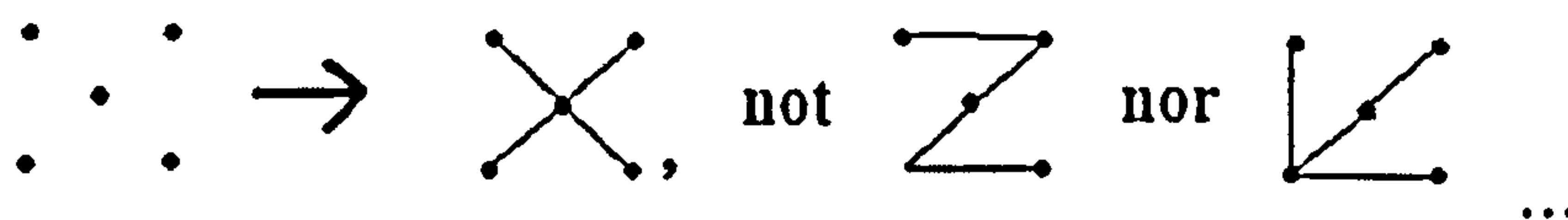


“queue” meaning waiting in line and another, i.e. “cue,” meaning of “signal.” It is possible also only when some poet/viewer sees the coincidence in the language and arranges them creatively into this textual block. It is a poetic rendezvous between a particular phenomenon of the language and the creativity of the poet/reader/translator. There is only a fine line between a linguistic coincidence and a linguistic organism compacted with sophisticated contextual relations.<sup>336</sup> Therefore, the reader/translator’s creative involvement becomes highlighted since constructing a new AAP demands creative input.

## Old Dots Can Link Anew

### Dots of Significance

James R. Pomerantz utilizes an experiment shown below to find out how the “proximity and good continuation”<sup>337</sup> are embodied in physical diagram. Viewers are asked to connect the dots in a diagram he provides in the way they think the dots are meant to be connected. One diagram and the results are provided below:



<sup>336</sup> As is the case of “l(a)” and “The Eagle.” See earlier discussion.

<sup>337</sup> “The law of Prägnanz (or the minimum principle) states that the visual field will be organized in the simplest or best way possible” (Pomerantz 160). “The simplest or best way” is characterized by “proximity and good continuation” of the elements that make up the visual field.

(Pomerantz 161)

The diagram on the left side of the arrow above is what they are given and those on the right are several examples of what viewers think the diagram is meant to be. As a result, most viewers see it as an X, the first of the diagrams from the left of those on the right side as shown above. Although Pomerantz aims at examining perception as an objective activity, there are apparent traces of subjectivity involved—therefore, the thesis argues, the beginning of creativity. On the one hand, according to Pomerantz, the structure of X is most often chosen because it conforms more with the law of Prägnanz, i.e. Pomerantz's hypothesis of human gestalt perception, than any other possibility. However, as this option resembles both the letter X that appears in daily texts and as the cross mark people use to check items while the others possess less association, so it means more to average viewers. It is arguable that it is this knowledge present in the viewers' mind, instead of the law of Prägnanz, that prompts people to connect the dots that way. Though Pomerantz may want to see how the natural perceiving faculty may function, the influence of this kind of association is present and forms an inseparable part to the faculty.

The text of a poem works as a mental visual field laid out in the reader's mind. When read, some parts of the text may seem more significant than the rest to readers as if apparent dots on a surface that are potential of forming pattern or

diagram. Different readers may find different parts more significant. These are dots of significance (DOS, hereafter) which the readers connect to form significant contextual relations for further interpretations and associations.

There is a type of DOS that is part of the structure of the genre. In this case, the patterns they form are also both partly innate in the genre and therefore pre-determined. The rhymed feet of the rhyme scheme, for example, serve as DOS that offers built-in framework for more contextual relations. There is another type of DOS in a poem arranged into the poem by the poet, purposively or out of artistic intuition. This type of DOS may require more creative involvement, for what individual viewers need to do is firstly to decide where these dots are if any, secondly to decide what patterns these dots form, and then produce their own interpretations for the patterns they perceive, i.e. the poetic gestalt they see in the poem. The first step is predetermined in the previous type of DOS and therefore, need no input from readers. All of these steps vary among different readers and the variety is also a sure sign the existence of creativity.

For DOS to be potential of contextual relations that generate poestalts, there is a point where the input from the author ends and that of the viewer begins. In Pomerantz's five-dot diagram, for example, the artist's job ends in arranging the five dots as they are. He/she may lay them down out of certain creative motive and



aesthetic intention but it is the viewer's job to take over and finish them, actualizing the aesthetic potentiality hoarded therein with their own creativity involved. The artist may have added a note about what the dots are meant to form, thus expressing explicitly what the creative motive and aesthetic intention is. Even so, viewers may claim the legitimacy of other possibilities.

### New Pictures in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*

Helen Vendler holds, "Shakespeare expended real effort in creating verbal connections between the body of the sonnet and its couplet, and the words he chose to reiterate in this way are almost always thematically highly significant ones" (xiv-xv). These repetitions as "verbal connections" as she argues are crucial constituents with which Shakespeare fabricates the unique poetic sophistication in his sonnets rather than superfluous redundancy as it may seem. "The true 'actors' in lyric are words, ..." as she puts it, "and the drama of any lyric is constituted by the successive entrances of new sets of words or new stylistic arrangements (grammatic, syntactical, phonetic) which are visibly in conflict with previous arrangements used with reference to the 'same' situation" (3). These "actors" arranged in the layout of a sonnet are seen as dots arranged on a page. There are poestalts hoarded in the contextual relations that these dots are potential to form. Vendler, from this sense,

sees among these DOS two kinds of contextual relations aesthetically potential: i.e.

Couplet Tie and Key Word.

Basically, the former are words that appear in the body of the sonnet (the three quatrains) and are reiterated identically or in a varied form in the couplet. The latter include words that appear in every quatrain and are reiterated identically or in a varied form in the couplet.<sup>338</sup> If a Key Word fails to appear only in one of the four structural units of the sonnet, i.e. the three quatrains and the couplet, she terms it a Defective Key Word. These relations function, as implied by the terminology, "Tie" and "Key," firstly as hinges that interlock these verbal structures and secondly keys that open new interpretation possibilities. In a word, Vendler firstly looks for DOS in the text, see what contextual relations they form and interprets the GAP's for poestalts therein, in any. Therefore, her creative input does not stop at spotting them. It is only the beginning of creative involvement, as shown below.

Sonnets 71 to 74 are generally treated as a cluster on the transience of youth, life and love<sup>339</sup> and from 76 onwards there is another group where the crisis of creativity impoverishment looms over the speaker's career as a poet. This leaves 75 isolated. However, as the significance of the Couplet Tie of 73 in this cluster is

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<sup>338</sup> Therefore, a Key Word must be a Couplet Tie and there may only be couplet tie but no key word.

<sup>339</sup> G. Blackmore Evans see 71-4 as a cluster directly. In his opinion, "[i]n Sonnets 71-4 the poet considers how, after his death, he wishes to be thought of (or not thought of) by the youth.... (177). How 73 comes to connect to 71-2 structurally is through 74, as Katherine Duncan-Jones sees it, since the poet in the sonnets write 74 to show that he change his mind about his absence after his death expressed in 71-2. See Duncan-Jones's note on 74.

explored further, an argument emerges to justify aesthetically that 75 serves as the last sonnet of the cluster starting from 71. More adjacent sonnets are interwoven to actualize more aesthetic potentiality. Vendler's analysis of the sonnet cluster from 71 to 75<sup>340</sup> will be used as the demonstration of how DOS forms contextual relations that in turn become basis for interpretation.

The heart of this cluster is sonnet 73. One of its main critical interests is how the three topic images in the three quatrains, i.e. the changing seasons, the ending day and the dying fire, seemingly convenient comparisons to human life, generate such powerful aesthetic energy.<sup>341</sup> Vendler points out the couplet tie of sonnet 73, "leaves" in line 2 and "leave" in line 14, functions as a concrete enactment of the comparison that a person will inevitably leave his life, youth and love as a tree will have to leave its leaves. Kerrigan also point out the pun here, "the young man must *leave* life as the *leaves* of line 2 the tree" (266). In the end of the life, a person will be like a leafless twig trembling in the freezing wind in the end of the year with its leaves of life gone to the ground. The image of leaf also provides the basis for the pun of "loving, leaving, leafless" (Vendler 336) and the chromatic basis that mediates the following two quatrains, the colour yellow of fading sunset and that of dying fire.

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<sup>340</sup> For the text, see Appendix 3.

<sup>341</sup> For example, William Empson manifests part of the secret by demonstrating how an appositive comparison of choirs and birds can be saturated with rich association without resorting to "pun, double syntax or dubiety of feeling." See Empson 2-3.



From this view point, one sees two DOS emerge in the first quatrains of 71 and 75: it echoes with the first quatrain of 71 by the logical inference that dead leaves go to the earth as a human being is buried when dead and, interestingly, the first quatrain of 75, which starts with feeding image, develops the image of nourishing rain in the second line. It is a ready and logical inference that bare trees revive and leaf when they are nourished by rain that fall on the ground. The word “ground” may not be here by coincidence but to correspond with the “ground” in the first quatrain of 71. The thesis will expand Vendler’s system here to reach beyond one sonnet: a Couplet Tie becomes a Cluster Tie, which helps bound sonnets of a cluster under a contextual relation.

As the speaker ages, his waning life may be compared to a tree shedding leaves on the ground where the person will literally go when he is dead and the person spoken to is the rain that can provide life-sustaining food that keeps him alive. There are more DOS collaborating with the leaves/leave pun in 73 that works as ties linking its semantic variations, now becoming DOS’s, in the couplets of 71 and 75. Both of them contain wording of leaving: “after I am gone” in the former, and “or all away” in the latter.

Sonnets 71, 72 and 73 follow closely the layout of the Shakespearean sonnet both in rhyme scheme and semantic structure. All three quatrains start with similar

syntactical or textual units. The similarity between 71, 72 and 73 is that each has a pattern repeated in the first three parts. In 71, we see a combination of a negative-tonal expression and a conditional clause in all three quatrains. In 72, we see a negative condition clause (unless, lest) leads each quatrain. In 73, the reiterated pattern (what you see in me) reaches down even to couplet. This changes in 74 and 75. In the 1906 Quarto *Sonnets* (hereon as Q), there is a comma at the end of both first and second line while no punctuation after "But be contented."<sup>342</sup> There has been disagreement in how to clarify the ambiguity caused by this punctuation. Should the comma at the end of first line be deleted to keep the grammatical ambiguity?<sup>343</sup> Should a period be added after "contented" and the opening three letters be read as a simple interjection?<sup>344</sup> Or should the comma at the end of the first line be deleted and the one at the end of the second line be replaced with a period or semicolon to give this opening interjection a temporal condition?<sup>345</sup> The last proposal would be a reasonable reading of the ambiguity if 75 is viewed as a part of this cluster because it will render 75 structurally similar to 74. The contextual relation formed with Cluster Tie helps strengthen this reading.

With the punctuation amended as in the last proposal, sonnet 75 is related to

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<sup>342</sup> See reproduction in Booth, Vendler.

<sup>343</sup> See Vendler 259 and Booth 64.

<sup>344</sup> See Malaplate 90.

<sup>345</sup> See Duncan-Jones 259.

74 by sharing contextual relations similar in structure. But 74, though thematically a development from the preceding three sonnets, is allocated in the way as the following table presents: a couplet of an independent statement with its own image, an argument of two lines supported by two statements each of which contains two lines. This pattern contains the significance that it leads the reader to include the next sonnet into this cluster. The following table shows the similarity in the structure of 74 and 75:

	Sonnet 74 & 75
Line 1-2	A couplet of an independent statement with its own image.
Line 3-4	A two-line statement to be supported or supplemented by the following four lines, which consist in two two-line clauses.
Line 5-8	two two-line clauses which either support or supplement the statement in line 3-4.
Line 9-12	A four-line statement.
Line 13-14	The couplet.

There are more correspondences in the structures of 74 and 75. In lines 5-8 of these sonnets, both lines 7's repeat a certain form of the line 5's in its own sonnet. In 74, a prosodic form is repeated: both of its lines 5 and 7 contain a caesura after the sixth syllable. In 75, a syntactic form is repeated: both of its lines 5 and 7 start with the temporal adverb "now." There is one point that may not be a simple coincidence when the two sonnets are viewed in the pattern of a pair: both line 9's start with



“so-.”

In addition, there emerge more DOS's when 73 is treated as a mirror at the centre; and ensuing this, also in paralleled positions between 71 and 75 and between 72 and 74. This phenomenon provides a sophisticated contextual relation structure that justifies the legitimacy of 75 as a member of this cluster other than one belonging to the next or an isolated sonnet that happens to be where it is.

	Outer pair (71 & 75)	Inner pair (72 & 74)	The mirror (73)
1 <sup>st</sup> quatrain	The image of a grave. It is indirectly presented by the image of worm (in the ground) in 71 while explicitly stated in 75.	The worth of the speaker. In 72 the speaker claims “nothing worth” can be proven present in himself while in 73 he believes there is some interest after all.	The graveyard, which echoes the grave image in the outer pair, 71 & 75, is hinted by the image of church choir.
2 <sup>nd</sup> quatrain	On the emotions aroused in one of the parties towards the other when in reminiscence.	On how the speaker is to be evaluated by the spoken to and the relationship of this evaluation to the world.	On the second half of this quatrain of the centre three sonnets, i.e. 72-4, death is the main issue.
3 <sup>rd</sup> quatrain	“If you look upon this verse” in 71 contrasts with the speaker feasts on the spoken-to's sight in 75.	The body of the speaker is used in the imagery.	The body, an image in the counterpart of the inner pair, 72 & 74, is implied in the image of deathbed.
The couplet	In 71, the spoken-to suffers while the speaker is gone. In 75, the speaker suffers while the spoke-to (which is all to the	On the worth of the sonnets and the speaker to the spoken-to.	“Leave ere long” correspond with the leaving motif in outer pair.

	former) is away.		
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Only with this contextual relation structure manifested can one of the aesthetic functions of 75 be revealed: the emotional basis for the feelings shown in 71 to 74 to which 75 injects substantial emotional energy. New poestalt, therefore, may emerge from the GAP in this structure, as shown below.

The self-evaluation in 71 to 74 with the spoken-to as the main criterion becomes an activity brimming with passion rather than “an imagined desired dialogue.”<sup>346</sup> The cluster starts with a statement in 71.6, “for I love you so,” which is never expressed directly and specifically just to what degree and in what way if the cluster end in 74. This is demonstrated with concrete description in the first couplet of 75, “So are you to my thoughts as food to life,/ Or as sweet seasoned showers are to the ground....” Joseph Pequigney holds that the contexts of 73 are important to the appreciation of this group of sonnets and argues, “[the four parts of 73] are nontransferable and significantly arranged” (Pequigney 292). In fact, viewed under these contextual relations, this cluster of sonnets is also “nontransferable and significantly arranged” and it becomes structurally justifiable and necessary to include 75 as the end of it and a transition to the next cluster of sonnets. As the love of the spoken-to for the speaker is mentioned directly and indirectly six times in the

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<sup>346</sup> See the full discussion by Vendler in p. 326-29. From her viewpoint, the 71-4 emits different aesthetic quality.

span of only four sonnets from 71 to 74,<sup>347</sup> sonnet 75, a manifesto of love, functions as a counterbalance on the speaker's part in this relationship and also as an indicator of the emotional temperature the chemistry of their love reaches.

## Assortment and Modulation

### How What One Chooses to See Matters

In Maier and Reninger's model, one can see more than one interpretation in the "Artist's Symbol." It can be a simple triangle or the beginning of a long straight road that ends in an unreachable distant point. The Duck-Rabbit Head double image is a typical demonstration of this ambiguity, where more than one image are meant to coexist simultaneously.<sup>348</sup> The figures produced below present two different versions of Duck-Rabbit Head double image by different artists. Figure 3A (Gregory 340) shows a duck's head looking to the left and Figure 3B (Rock 167) to the right (the arrow is mine):

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<sup>347</sup> See the discussion by Pequigney in Schiffer, pp 296-96.

<sup>348</sup> One may argue that the Rubin Vase, also a double image, may serve the purpose here. However, there is a crucial difference: while in the Rubin Vase the two images offsetting each other are independent except the border between them, the two images in the Duck-Rabbit Head share almost every constituent in the picture. As this section is about what reader's creativity can bring out different results from the same body of text, the Duck-Rabbit Head becomes the more suitable choice. See Appendix 4 for more versions.



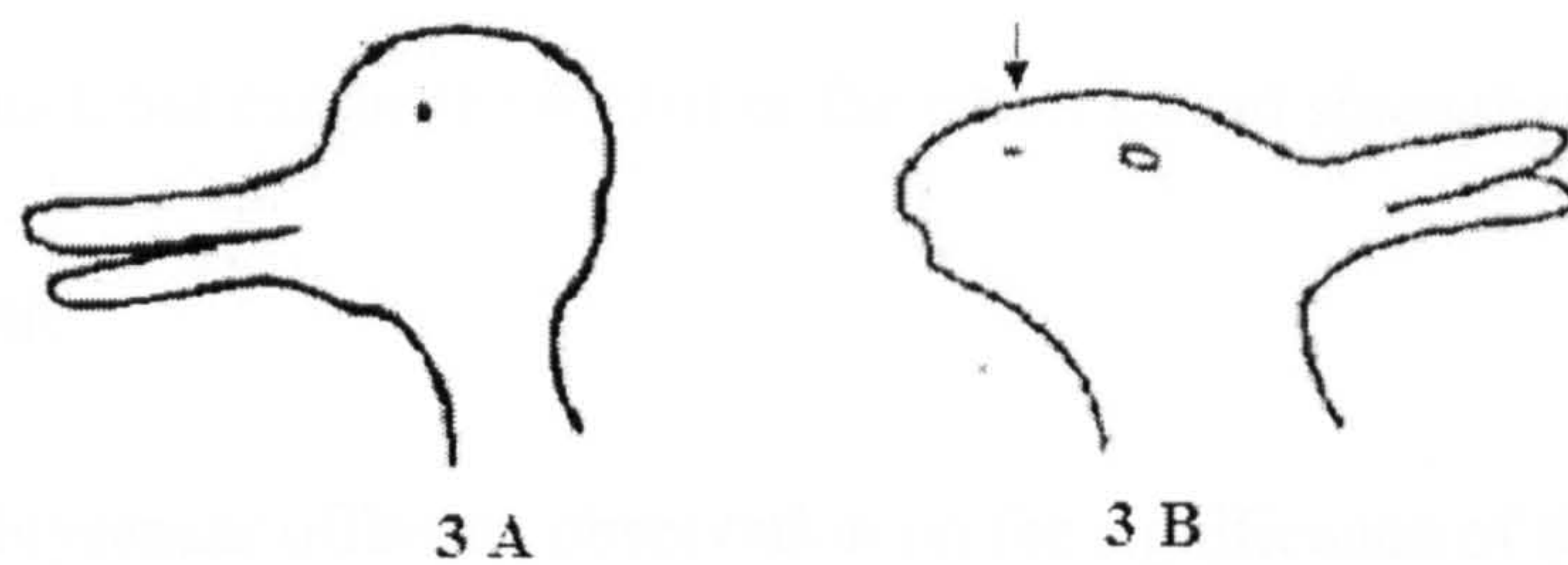


Figure 3A &amp; 3B

Basically, the head consists of a roughly fist-shaped figure standing for the skull of the two animals in question with two finger-shaped parts attached on one side of it that stand for both the ears of the rabbit image and the bill of the duck image. Inside the skull, there may be either one or two marks. When there is only one (as in 3A), it can be viewed as the eye of both the animal in question. When there are two (as in 3B), the one closer to the fingers stands for the eye of both images and the one farther from the fingers as the nostril of the rabbit but meaningless to the duck's interpretation. For all these elements, there may be flexibility in size, shape and position. Viewers may find one version with a head rounder or the ears sharper than another. Despite the difference, the figure is supposed to present a duck looking one way and a rabbit looking the other way. Figure 3A displays a duck looking to the left and a rabbit looking the other way. Figure 3B presents a duck looking to the right and a rabbit to the left. There are two differences between these two versions. In Figure 3A, the dot is the eye for both images. In Figure 3B, the circle serves the purpose but there is a barely visible flat dot at the left side of it as the arrow indicates. It is useless to the



image of the duck but can be the nostril of the rabbit's head since that area is the muzzle of rabbit.

Anne Cluysenaar offers an observation on the significance of this additional dot. She produces a Duck-Rabbit Head with one circle in the middle of the skull and a barely visible little dot a distance away on its left side (where my arrow is pointing), as shown here in Figure 4 (32):

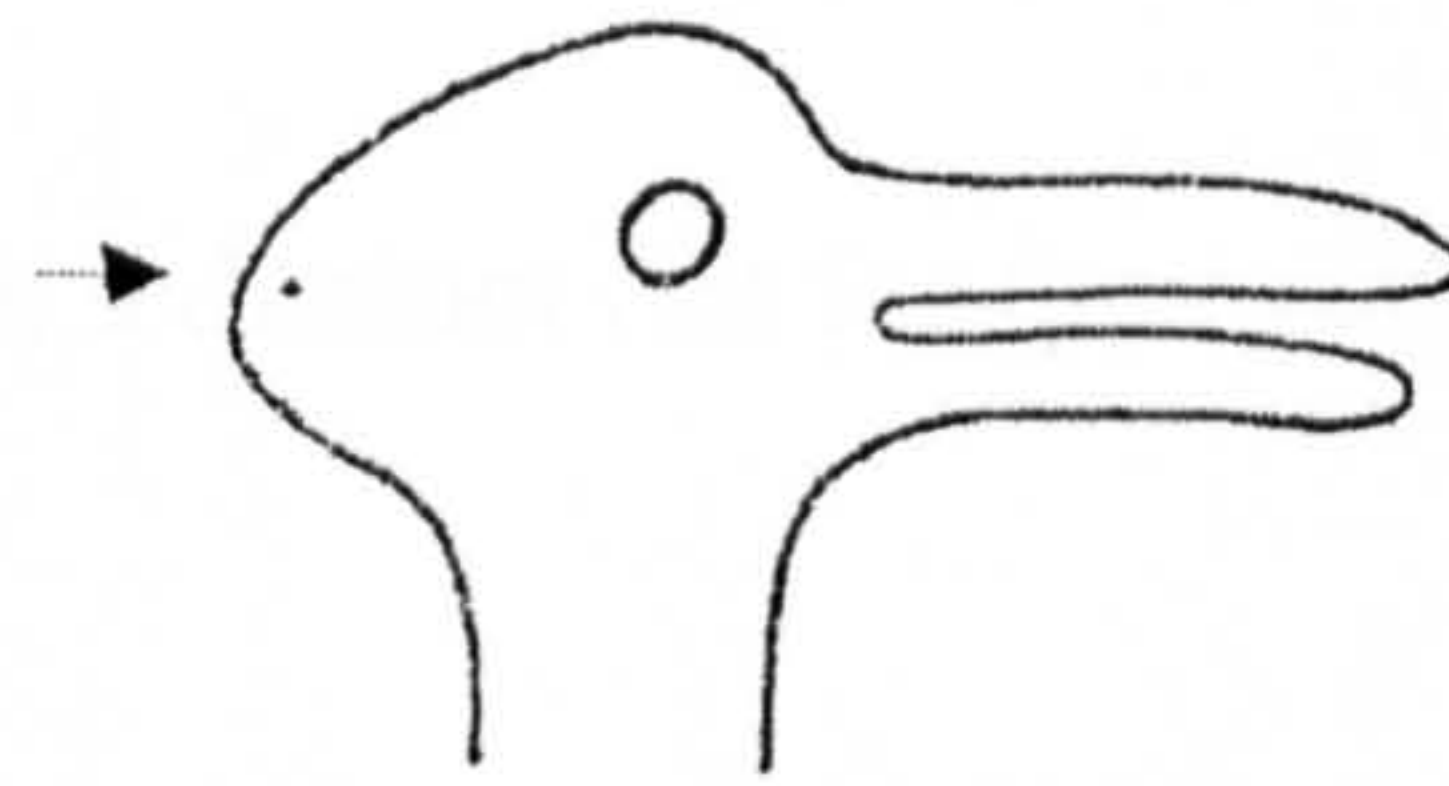


Figure 4

Her argument on the significance of this small dot touches on several crucial issues related to the reader's creative involvement. She states:<sup>349</sup>

Our interpretation of the dot to the left can be influenced either from outside the figure, that is by labeling it as a duck or as a rabbit, or from inside, by adding to the picture features associated with either animal (whether with its own shape or its environment). According to the pressure of significance, the dot will appear either negligible (at most an irrelevant blot on the back of the duck's head, or even a fault in the paper) or important (the rabbit's nose) . . . if we increase the size of the dot, at a certain point we will be forced to admit

<sup>349</sup> The issue of size is what Cluysenaar's argument is built upon. But, the dot there, no matter what its size is, is a fault to the gestalt of interpreting it as duck's head in a basic logic of her argument—there is a fixed requirement for a gestalt, which may be fallacious when one tries to apply in investigating how a gestalt is constructed.



that its prominence cannot be reduced by the context. We shall be forced to interpret it as a 'fault' in the drawing of a duck or to interpret the figure as a rabbit, whatever the label or the environment may suggest. (32)

Cluysennar's remark implies that there are precepts for what constitutes both a rabbit's head and a duck's head. A duck's head needs the beak and the eye and no more while a rabbit's head needs the long ears, the eye and the nostril and no less. Under this precept, the dot for nostril becomes a critical point for the figure to look like either image since it is what the two possibilities do not share. If the picture is drawn as the one below with a distinct dot for the nostril for the rabbit (the modification is mine),

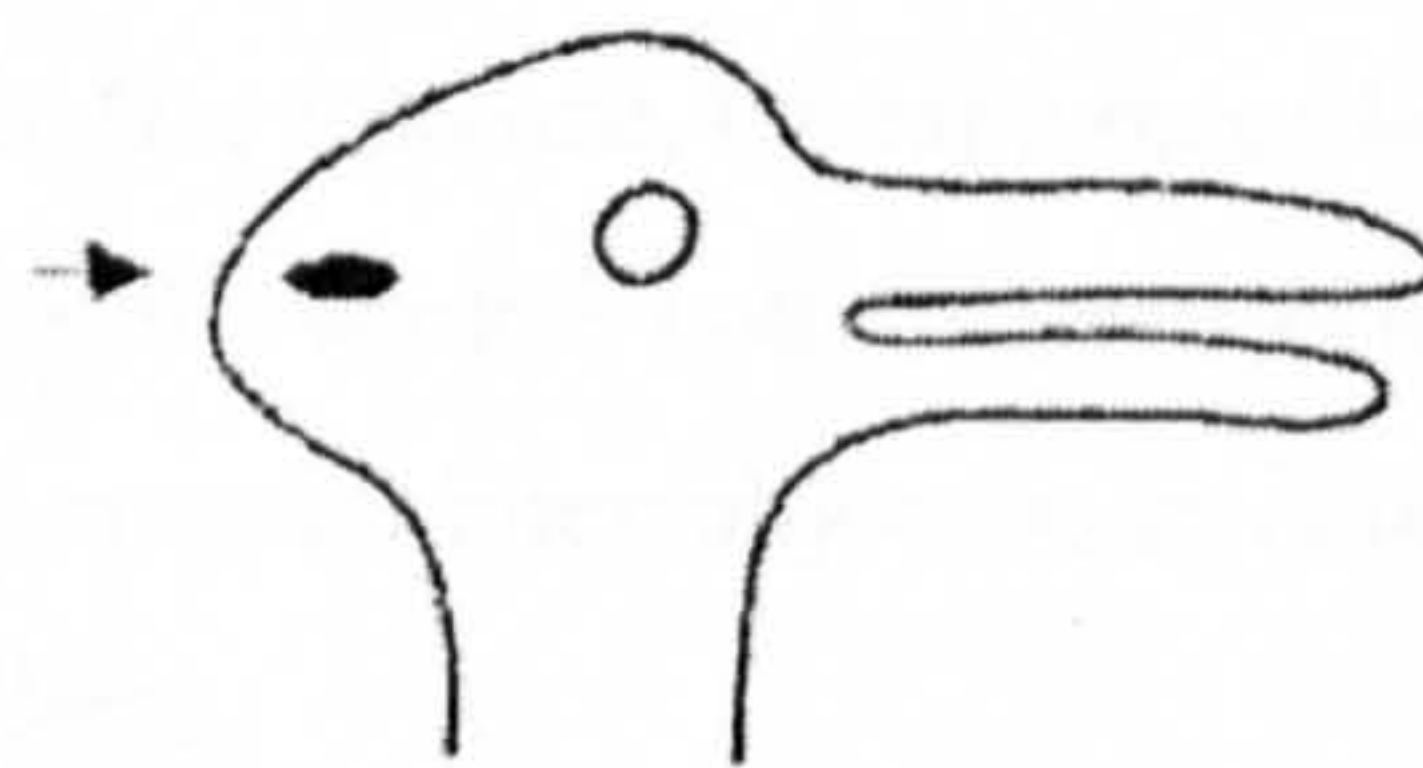


Figure 5

it would be definitely be a rabbit's head since, to Cluysenaar, the dot is supposed to lead a viewer to see the picture as a rabbit's head.

Her remark also implies that the picture can only be one or the other and it can be decided by certain authority—i.e. the label that tells on-lookers what the figure is. What she thinks this authority is is revealed in her idea of the nature of “the



work of verbal art" (Cluysenaar 33).<sup>350</sup> She argues, "The work of verbal art thus has a structure which is neither objective nor subjective, but intersubjective. ...

Sensitivity of reaction varies with individuals, with experience of reading, and with mood and situation. But a solid intersubjective basis remains. If I miss something, you can 'show' me that it is there. And that is one of the purposes of most useful literary discussion." (Cluysenaar 33-4). So, if the figure is well known there must be a certain consensus about what it is supposed to look like. Ingarden has also pointed out,

The literary work as such is a purely intentional formation which has the source of its being in the creative acts of consciousness of its author and its physical foundation in the text set down in writing or through other physical means of possible reproduction (for instance, the tape recorder). By virtue of the dual stratum of its language, the work is both intersubjectively accessible and reproducible, so that it becomes an intersubjective intentional object, related to a community of readers.

(Ingarden 14).

However, one vital element is missing in both arguments by Cluysenaar and Ingarden, i.e. the faculty of thinking and perceiving holistically. From a comparison of Figures 3 to 5, any precept of what constituents either image should possess cannot rule out the fact that the interpretation of the other is still present no matter

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<sup>350</sup> Poetry is arguably the true type of "work of verbal art." Although she uses a more general term here, i.e. "[t]he work of verbal art" (33), Cluysenaar will probably agree with it since the dominant majority of the examples in her discussion on literary stylistics in the book are poetry.

which image is more apparent. Since a human mind sees holistically, it makes up what is missing when sufficient constituents are present and, as importantly, ignores what is redundant. For example, between Figures 4 and 5, the duck's image in the former may be more obvious<sup>351</sup> than the rabbit's and in the latter vice versa. In the former, there is a shadow of the rabbit's image, nostril or no nostril. In the latter, there is a shadow of duck, be it one with a big dot on the back of the head. Even when the nostril consists of a prerequisite element of the picture of a rabbit's head, the absence of the dot may be detrimental for the picture to be interpreted as a rabbit as in Figure 3A, but an alert reader would feel that the figure somehow recalls that a rabbit and senses a nuance of rabbit in the picture a duck. Even if there is a label under Figure 3B reading "A Rabbit's Head," the presence of the constituents that forms a the image of a duck's head might very well trigger the faculty of seeing gestalt in an alert mind and make it see the duck's image besides the rabbit's.

A viewer who sees only the duck's image in Figure 4 may wonder what that little dot may be and even suspect that it is a printing fault, as Cluysenaar suggests. Then, the mind sees, this would-be flaw may be an indicator of another new possibility and it becomes apparent that there is a rabbit's image in and on at the same time the image of the duck. The oddness of the existence of this dot turns into

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<sup>351</sup> At least under Cluysenaar's concept of the images of these two creatures.

an aesthetic effect when the viewer sees the rabbit's image.<sup>352</sup>

## New Faces from an Old Head

An issue emerges from a comparison of these derivations of the duck-rabbit double image figure. Different readers may see different combination of nuances of the two images and therefore end in different concretizations of the same gestalt concept. There may be different ideas about the size, shape, and relative position of each and every part of the two images. The endless combination of these possibilities can bring inexhaustible nuances of style. If the artist plans to reproduce only the rabbit's image, it becomes necessary to decide whether and where to put something in his/her reproduction for the nostril. On the other hand, if the artist plans to reproduce only the duck's image, he/she may omit the nostril to make the rabbit's image subtler so as to foreground the duck's.

Furthermore, a more sophisticated attempt would be to produce a head that looks ostensibly like one of the images and implying the other, with clues of different degrees of subtlety. The size of the dot in Cluysenaar's version is a good demonstration of this kind of modulation. An artist may leave no dot in Figure 4 and make the Rabbit's Head there a faint recall or he/she can leave a dot as large as the

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<sup>352</sup> This provides a footnote to the concept that poetry is "strange." Before the gestalt emerges, its constituents may cause wonder of its existence. Viewers may wonder why they are put down in a strange way that does not make sense.



one in Figure 5 to let the Rabbit's Head overshadow the Duck's. In fact, each constituent is open to modulation, such as the shape of the skull, the two fingers and the neck. For example, he/she may also sharpen the finger-like parts a little to render them less like a rabbit's ears so the rabbit-interpretation will be even fainter. An artist can always find new constituents for a unique modulation. With the four versions here, they show that modulation may go beyond the obvious constituents like the skull, the finger-shaped parts, the eye and the dot. Even the different way the head tilts, to name one, can become a significant constituent and render difference to the faces. This kind of adjustment endows each individual look under the similar AAP the potentiality of presenting unique nuances—i.e. even when two artists may decide to create a Duck-Rabbit Head that shows both images as apparent, for example, they will always come up with ones aesthetically different. This type of modulation will be termed as a Modulation for Aesthetic Potentiality (as MAP hereafter).

In the case of poetry, when some of the constituents of a poem are aesthetically effective in an AAP, they may stand out as a unified body, i.e. a poestalt. This poestalt reflects a part of the aesthetic potential hoarded between the work and the reader. As a result, any perceived poestalt is unique. There is something more in seeing than just looking. The work is a co-creator in the aesthetic experience of

seeing poestalt in a poem<sup>353</sup> and its reader works as its partner.

On the other hand, it can also be argued that all of the elements in the aesthetic experience of viewing the work of art or of the poestalt generated from reading a poem can be traced directly or indirectly only to the work itself since this gestalt is co-created by the work and the viewer. However this is far from replication. Matias argues that experiencing the gestalt of a poem is like repeating a frozen experience in the work. In his explication of an aesthetic experience, in the case of poetry, what happens when a poem reader sees a poestalt emerging from the poem, Matias passes on vaguely on the crucial issue: how reading is a form of re-creation instead of replication.<sup>354</sup> As I argue with the Maier and Reninger model and Cluysenaar's version of the duck-rabbit head, something more complicated and sophisticated can happen from "the unity of the object" to what gestalt any individual recipient comes up with in his/her appreciation of the work. As a result, there will be more than one poestalt in a poem like a Duck-Rabbit Head that has more than one face and each has endless aesthetically different variations. With the imagination of the reader involved through constructing a new AAP and concretizing through effective MAP, the

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<sup>353</sup> As a creator, a reader/translator does not create a new picture of the SP as a poet compose a poem that never exists per se but creates a face by adjusting and alternating details that is both new and corresponding to the original one.

<sup>354</sup> Matias states, "(1) an [aesthetic] experience is an independent reality, event, or object of some sort which is different from the object which occasions it; (2) experience is a *unified* reality, and as such it can be examined or analyzed like ordinary objects; and (3) the unity of the experience is caused by the unity of the aesthetic object; the unity of the object is in some manner replicated, at least to some extent, in the experience" [underlining is the thesis's] (Mitias 47).

poestalt emerging from the SP naturally and necessarily metamorphoses in the TP.

## A Case Study

Han Shan, the legendary hermit monk poet of the Tang dynasty (618-906 AD), is a poet whose corpus is in a condition like Duck-Rabbit Head.<sup>355</sup> One of the causes of his ambiguity comes from his obscure origin and his work is problematic in the several ways. Firstly, Han Shan has been a mythical figure from the time his name was first known and his existence is still in doubt today. In the preface to the earliest anthology, the source of almost all later accounts about him (Xiang 931-33), the editor provided several anecdotes of his brief encounters with the poet but they appear more mythological than realistic. To aggravate the problem, the authenticity of this preface, the identity of the editor and, even, some of the poems themselves have been challenged.<sup>356</sup> Secondly, those some three hundred poems in the anthology, compiled in no apparent system, contain obvious discrepancies in style and thoughts and contradict one another regarding the biographical facts of the poet.<sup>357</sup> This implies multi-authorship. Thirdly, the completion dates of these poems

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<sup>355</sup> This ancient poet, only a minor figure in the literary Chinese tradition, is ironically one of the most esteemed ancient Chinese poets in Western concepts of Chinese literature. Since his English translation by Arthur Waley was published in 1954, there have been more than ten partial and two complete translations into English published, including those by Burton Watson, Wu Chiyu, Gary Snyder, Peter Hobson, Red Pine, Arthur Tobias, Robert Henricks and Peter Stambler—a popularity shared only by a few major classical Chinese poets like Tu Fu and Li Bai.

<sup>356</sup> See chapter three of Chen Huijian and the article by Wu Chiyu.

<sup>357</sup> In “*fu mu xu jing duo*” 父母續經多 (Xiang 50), “*shao xiao dai jing zu*” 少小帶經鉏 (Xiang 291), it seems that the poet was born into a big family of the class of peasant. But in “*xun si shao*



may extend over one and a half centuries. Since rhyming is related to how a character was read at certain period of time, it is arguably a useful clue to tell the date of a poem. According to Edwin G. Pulleyblank, three fourths of the anthology was rhymed in Early Middle Chinese, which was popular in the early seventh century, and one fourth in Late Middle Chinese, which was popular in the eighth century.<sup>358</sup> This also implies multi-authorship, as the completion date may span well over one and a half centuries. Therefore, the corpus may present a person who arrives at the highest level of the Chan<sup>359</sup> through evolving from a mundane person to an enlightened Chan thinker and, at the same time, a person who spends his life in search of the Way, living in the wilderness and experiencing ups and downs in his religious quest and finding himself a loser in the end. The story remains open-ended. This phenomenon is foregrounded in partial translations where the translators may create a clearer picture of the poet that they think they see in the poems.

Dealing with the ambiguity in the SP, both Watson and Waley use their ideas about what the SP poet may have been as keynote of the MAP in both the selection and arrangement of the poems to translate as well as in the translation of each poem.

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*nian ri* 尋思少年日 (Xiang 274), it seems that the poet was an aristocrat. And, in “*wo zhu zi xiang cun*” 我住在鄉村 (Xiang 755), the poet stated plainly that he was an orphan without any clue of who its parents were. To complicate the situation, there is no absolute certainty in telling which of them Han Shan is adopting a fictitious personae.

<sup>358</sup> See Pulleyblank in Miao, pp. 163-185.

<sup>359</sup> Instead of Zen, the transliteration from Japanese, the one from Chinese, i.e. Chan, is adopted to avoid the unnecessary annotation of Zen gained from the Japanese tributary of this religion, which may be non-existent in Chan, its Chinese predecessor.

A survey of the whole collections shows that their selection and arrangement of the poems present different images of the SP poet. When the individual TP is examined, it shows that this image works as the core of MAP with which such ambiguity is dealt with in rendering each poem. This is clearly shown in the following critical comparison between the different places and ways of interpretation of a SP that both translators include into their collections, i.e. "*Gao gao feng ding shang*."<sup>360</sup>

Although neither Waley and Watson explicitly divide their translations into different stages of the poet's life, both arrange their selections in a biographical sequence to present their views of Han Shan. In fact, Watson had been shown and read Waley's translation when he was in Kyoto, Japan, studying Zen himself in early 50's. He did not start the selection until he got the Han Shan selected and annotated by Iriya Yoshitaka published in 1958.<sup>361</sup> How Watson sees Han Shan is obviously influenced his own experience in Zen Buddhist and the idolatry of Han Shan in Japan and why he translates Han Shan into a different image is not unnecessary a attempt to compete with Waley's.

Waley's selection of twenty-seven poems can be divided into four sections,

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<sup>360</sup> According to Pulleyblank, "*gao gao feng ding shan*" belongs to the group of Early Middle Chinese. See Pulleyblank in Miao, 190.

<sup>361</sup> See his letter to Paul Kahn in "Han Shan in English" (np).



representing four stages of Han Shan's life.<sup>362</sup> The first section, poems one to five, concerns his life before he broke away from his family. He started as a self-sufficient scholar farmer, following the example of Tao Yuanming (372-427 AD), a great poet of the Jin dynasty (317-420 AD), who Han Shan quotes from time to time.<sup>363</sup> The situation began to deteriorate and his plan was unsuccessful. In the third poem, Han Shan leaves his siblings and his wife, becoming a roaming scholar.<sup>364</sup> The fourth poem is a description of the miserable life of a poor, down and out scholar.<sup>365</sup> In the fifth poem comes the dawn of his enlightenment to the Way.<sup>366</sup> The second section, poems six to nineteen, displays how Han Shan managed a Chan hermit's life on the mountain. He seems to enjoy some progress in the cultivation of Chan, but, in the last poem of this section, there is apparent recession—after “countless years” (6) his sense of frustration in the search for the Way still troubles him and he is aging.<sup>367</sup> The third section, poems twenty to twenty five, all of them melancholy and nostalgic, presents a quite different emotional milieu from the preceding section. We find a Han Shan beginning to drown himself in the memory of his long lost past in the world. In poem twenty-four, he ventures to return to his hometown for a visit and is agonized

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<sup>362</sup> Waley tops his translation with a sketch of Han Shan's life and some information of historical and religious background. See Waley “27 Poems,” page 3. However, it is the translation that provides a picture with feelings and life.

<sup>363</sup> As in “*wu jia hao yin lun*” 吾家好隱淪 (Xiang 23).

<sup>364</sup> As in “*shao xiao dai jing zu*” 少小帶經鋤 (Xiang 291).

<sup>365</sup> As in “*zen deng zhu pin shi*” 蹭蹬諸貧士 (Xiang 269).

<sup>366</sup> As in “*zhi zhe jun pao wo*” 智者君拋我 (Xiang 74).

<sup>367</sup> As in “*yu xiang dong yan qu*” 欲向東巖去 (Xiang 769).



to find that only few of his kinsmen and friends have survived the three decades of his absence. This section ends with the poet reminiscing about his colourful past in the dying candlelight of his life.<sup>368</sup> The last section, poems twenty-six and twenty-seven, works as an epilogue, concluding the series both descriptively and philosophically: the twenty-sixth summarizes Han Shan's mountain life in a simple sketch of a moment on a hill; the twenty-seventh, also the last, generalizes on a universal issue, the relation between life and death.<sup>369</sup>

Watson also arranges the one hundred poems he selects historiographically, but his idea of how Han Shan cultivated Chan is stated explicitly with a passage in the introduction to his translation: "Personally, I prefer to read the poems as a chronicle of spiritual search—rewarded at times by moments of wonderful contentment, but at other times frustrated by loneliness and despair—rather than as a pat report of success" (*Cold Mountain* 14). He starts with the biographical poems along with the satirical poems where the poet shows increasing disgust of the world. In poem 32, Han Shan splits from relatives. The five poems from poem 33 to poem 37 depict a transitional period between his family life and the life as a hermit, when he lives as a wandering scholar, which ends in destitution. These five poems, where he bemoans his past good life and his failed career, serve as a justification for his

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<sup>368</sup> As in "zuo ri he you you" 昨日何悠悠 (Xiang 338).

<sup>369</sup> As in "yu shi sheng ke pi" 欲識生死譬 (Xiang 271).

resolution to start a new life. From poem 38 on, where Han Shan states clearly that “Today I’ve come home to Cold Mountain” (*Cold Mountain* 56), the section “on his retiring to Cold Mountain” begins. Though Watson states that he “closes the selection with a group of poems on Buddhist themes” (*Cold Mountain* 12), the Buddhism-related themes and content are in fact more or less present after poem 38 but prevalent after poem 85. In that poem, Han Shan returns to his hometown to visit friends and relatives after thirty years of reclusive life on the mountain. It is interesting to note that from poem 47 to poem 53, Watson places several poems in which Han Shan talks of the difficulties he encounters on his spiritual journey in search of Cold Mountain. This adds a touch of biographical realism, with the uncertainties typical of a person who has just started a vocation to which he decides to devote his whole life. Watson’s translation ends with a confident Han Shan who believes in his achievement in Chan and urges readers to own a copy of his poetry for regular study.<sup>370</sup>

The overall phenomenon of Duck-Rabbit Head in Han Shan also happens in individual poems. “*Gao gao feng ding shang*” is an epitome. The transliteration and

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<sup>370</sup> Poem 100 of Watson’s collection, the last one, is a confident self-advertisement. The first couplet reads as follows: “Do you have the poems of Han-shan in you house?/ They’re better for you than sutra-reading!/ ...” (Watson, *Cold Mountain* 118). The Chinese text is as follows: 家有寒山詩/勝汝看經卷/書放屏風上/時時看一遍 (Xiang 794).

the gloss of each character and the literal translation of each line are provided below and enumerated sequentially. The number at the end of each transliteration line is the line number.<sup>371</sup>

1	<i>gao</i>	<i>gao</i>	<i>feng</i>	<i>ding</i>	<i>shang</i>	1
2	high	high	peak	top	upon	
3	Upon the high, high peak					
1	<i>si</i>	<i>gu</i>	<i>ji</i>	<i>wu</i>	<i>bian</i>	2
2	four	look	extreme	no	border	
3	Looking around, no border in sight					
1	<i>du</i>	<i>zuo</i>	<i>wu</i>	<i>ren</i>	<i>zhi</i>	3
2	alone	sit	no	people	know	
3	Sitting alone, no one knows it					
1	<i>gu</i>	<i>yue</i>	<i>zhao</i>	<i>han</i>	<i>quan</i>	4
2	deserted	moon	shine	cold	spring	
3	A deserted moon shines on a cold spring					
1	<i>quan</i>	<i>zhong</i> <sup>372</sup>	<i>qie</i>	<i>wu</i>	<i>yue</i>	5
2	spring	within	in fact	no	moon	
3	No moon in the spring after all					
1	<i>yue</i>	<i>zi</i>	<i>zai</i>	<i>qing</i>	<i>tian</i>	6

<sup>371</sup> The Chinese text is as follows:

高高峰頂上	
四顧極無邊	2
獨坐無人知	
孤月照寒泉	4
泉中且無月	
月自在青天	6
吟此一曲歌	
歌終不是禪	8

(Xiang 750)

<sup>372</sup> This *zhong* 中 is a different but symphonic character to that in line eight 終.



2 moon self at blue sky  
 3 The moon is in the blue sky

1 *yin ci yi qu ge* 7  
 2 chant this one tune song  
 3 I sing this piece of song

1 *ge zhong bu shi chan* 8  
 2 song after all not be Chan truth  
 3 The song, after all, is not the Chan

As Dufrenne points out, “form is the organizing principle of the sensuous and that which exalts it to the level of art” (142). Accordingly, how the forms, or the structure of contextual relations, in the ST achieve aesthetic effect is an important issue in interpreting a poem. This poem contains two montaged structures. One is the conventional reading of the genre, *lǚshi*,<sup>373</sup> in which this poem is composed, termed as a quartet reading. It consists of four syntactically independent couplets: head couplet (usually non-parallel), chin couplet (parallel), neck couplet (parallel) and tail couplet (non-parallel). The other is a trio reading, based on an interlocking contextual relations, formed by parallel rhetoric and pause pattern. There are three interlocking parts in this reading: 1) lines one to three, 2) lines four to six and 3) lines six to eight. But this shows retrospectively since the connecting contextual relations emerge only

<sup>373</sup> Approximately nine tenths of Han Shan belong to the genre of five-character *lǚshi* (literally, “regulated verse”). It is a prosody-compacted poetic genre that matured in the Tang dynasty and remained popular down to the Qing dynasty. There are two varieties of it, five-character and seven-character *lǚshi*’s, different in the number of character each line contains.

after the whole poem are read. The first part may emerge when it becomes clear to readers that they are all centred around an implicit “I,” and it can be a narrative passage in itself. When the next three lines are read, another part emerges from them that is formed by two *ding zhen*’s (literally, thimbles),<sup>374</sup> a rhetorical structure in which one line starts with the character with which the preceding line ends. As shown, *quan* and *yue* connect lines four and five and lines five and six respectively, hinging the three lines into a unit. This part presents an interaction between three images: the moon, the sky and a spring. Another complication here is that the second link, *yue*, the image of the moon, echoes *gu yue* at the head of this part and forms a significant loop. However, the last line of this part itself heads the third part. After lines 6 to 8 are read, a shared pattern in these lines emerges: they all have a pause after the first character in the line. As this arrangement differs from the conventional place for pause for a five-character verse, i.e. after the second character,<sup>375</sup> it can be meant for aesthetic potential, which is explored in Watson’s translation.

The table below presents the literal translation of each part in the two readings:

Line numbers	The quartet reading	The trio reading
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<sup>374</sup> I.e. 頂針.

<sup>375</sup> Conventionally, in five-character *lǔshi*, the major pause in a line happens between the second and the third characters, creating a 2-3 reading plan.

Line 1	I am on the top of a high hill, looking into	No one knows that I am here alone on the top of a high hill, looking into endless space on all sides (part one: lines 1-3).
Line 2	endless space on four sides (couplet one).	
Line 3	I sit all alone and no one knows of my	The moon, reflected in the spring and brightening it, is in the blue sky above, not in the spring (part two: lines 4-6). ♦ And, singing this song, I do not mean to tell you (readers) that this is the Chan itself (part three: lines 6-8).
Line 4	existence, like the lonely moon in a cold spring (couplet two).	
Line 5	But the moon in the spring is but illusion;	
Line 6	she is far above in the sky. (couplet three)	
Line 7	This poem I am chanting here is not Chan	
Line 8	after all (couplet four).	

Two readings bring forth very different images of the hermit in the poem. In the quartet reading, also the conventional reading for this genre, the second couplet is foregrounded by two facts: 1) this couplet closely parallels the existence of the hermit with the moon-spring imagery; 2) only here are the emotional epithets for loneliness or solitude used and it even happens twice, one applied to the hermit and the other to the moon. This sense of loneliness is further deepened by *han* (literally, “cold”), the epithet on the spring. As the quartet reading of *lǜshi* implies a conventional quartet structure of making a point, i.e. *qi* (preface), *cheng* (revelation of the theme or subject), *zhuan* (development or counter thought) and *he* (conclusion),<sup>376</sup> the parallelism of the poet and the moon in the second couplet becomes significant. It becomes the keynote to the mood and the theme of the poem. In addition, if the moon were to contain a religious connotation as the Way, as in Chan Buddhism, instead of a reflection of the poet himself, the poet could have

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<sup>376</sup> I.e. 起承轉合.



substituted *ming*, literally “bright,” for *gu*, which is of the same tone and also a conventional modifier of the moon. The cold loneliness offset an image that is emotional rather than philosophical. The last couplet, connoting a conclusion, emits a trace of pessimism in this context, implying also that the effort and struggle for the Way could be in vain.

On the other hand, the trio reading presents a hermit who has a positive attitude in his quest for the Way, which results from two critical differences entailing the division. Firstly, since the first part of the trio reading ends between the description of the existence of the hermit and the moon-spring image, the division breaks the bond between the hermit and the moon-spring imagery. That is to say, unlike the quartet reading, none of the three sections in the trio reading contain both the hermit and the moon-spring image. Therefore, the poet equates himself far less with the elements in nature than the quartet reading does and the moon-spring imagery can involve much less personal feelings here than in the quartet reading. Secondly, since line six links the latter five lines into a larger unit, turning the trio into an uneven dual (3-5 reading plan), it becomes the centre and the crux of the latter part of this uneven dual. With line six as the centre of the latter half, the fact that the moon reflected in the spring is no moon (lines four and five) is paralleled significantly with the fact that the Chan song chanted by the poet is not the Chan (lines seven and

eight). This contextual relation may connote that, just as the moon in the spring is not the moon, the religious cultivation (singing about Chan) is not the Way, which, however, is the purpose of the cultivation. It also sheds new light on the symphonicity between the parallel second characters of the second lines of both parts, i.e. the *zhong* in line five and the *zhong* in line eight, a contextual relation which does not exist in quartet reading. This interwoven parallelism also makes the trio reading much more philosophical than the quartet readings, revealing a Chan argument. In short, the first part of the trio reading creates a more philosophical image of the hermit and the latter two provide the thinking in his mind. The hermit goes to the top of the hill and an epiphany strikes him right there before the moon upon the hill and above the spring, presented through a sophisticated argument composed of multi-layered rhetoric. This image is more emotionally detached from either the moon or the spring than the one emerging from the quartet reading.

Both intending to be biographical, Waley's Han Shan and Watson's Han Shan differ through the translator's different selection and arrangement. The latter presents a Han Shan achieving a more elevated spiritual status than the former. In Waley's translation, we find a Chan hermit who does not achieve Chan epiphany after long years of hardship in the wilderness and ends in regretful misery as shown in the

twentieth to twenty-fifth poems. In Watson's, we find a Chan hermit who has survived and achieved the epiphany of the Chan truth, which is explicitly pointed out by the poem with which Watson concludes his selection, where his Han Shan proudly persuades every reader to keep a copy of his poetry anthology handy for it contains the wisdom of Chan (*Cold Mountain* 118). This overall ambiance works as a decisive factor in how the ambiguity and obscurity in Han Shan's poetry are dealt with.

As "gao gao feng ding shang" is a part of the image that emerges from the whole selection of either translation, this image should be a keynote to the MAP that the two translators adopts to shape their translation of this poem so that it coheres aesthetically with the overall image they intend to present, just as an artist shapes a constituent of the Duck-Rabbit Head picture to cohere aesthetically with the image they see and try to recreate. Therefore, how this keynote functions in translation becomes a relevant issue in a critical comparison of the two translations.

In Waley, it is a part of the epilogue that concludes the unsuccessful quest of the Way of his Han Shan. In Watson, it is the sixty-second poem where his Han Shan struggles optimistically with ups and downs in his quest of the Way in the mountain.

The following are the translations by Waley and Watson:

I sit and gaze on this highest peak of all;  
Wherever I look there is distance without end.  
I am all alone and no one knows I am here,



A lonely moon is mirrored in the cold pool.	4
Down in the pool there is not really a moon;	
The only moon is in the sky above.	6
I sing to you this one piece of song;	
But in the song there is not any Zen.	8

(Waley, *Encounter* 8)

High, high from the summit of the peak,	
Whatever way I look, no limit in sight!	2
No one knows I am sitting here alone.	
A solitary moon shines in the cold spring.	4
Here in the spring—this is not the moon.	
The moon is where it always is—in the sky above.	6
And though I sing this one little song,	
In the song there is no Zen.	8

(Watson, *Cold Mountain* 80)

Although each line in classical Chinese poetry is syntactically independent, Waley organizes his TP into four sentences to conform closely to the four couplets in *lǜshi*, and therefore echoes the quartet reading of the poem. In contrast, Watson makes the first two lines and the last two lines each a sentence and keeps lines three to six single-lined sentences. The first two sentences, including lines one to three, focus on “I” the hermit, stating where the poet is and what situation he is in. Line four ends with “spring” followed by a description of the “spring” in the former half of the next line, and then line five ends with “moon” to be followed by “the moon” that heads the next line. In this way, lines four to six roughly recreate the “thimble” rhetoric structure and centre on the moon as the ST. In addition, an “and” heads line

seven and links the last two lines to the preceding line group, which make an uneven dual reading feasible for this poem, i.e. 3-5 reading. As a result, Watson's translation conforms to the trio reading. In a word, when the reading plan is concerned, Watson has managed to keep more aspects of Han Shan's creativity in prosody, i.e. the complicated interwoven structure on the basis of regulated verse itself while Waley mechanically transfers the couplet division which was almost always observed by regulated verse poets of the Tang dynasty, including even Du Fu, the virtuoso of the genre. From the analysis provided above, the quartet reading presents a pessimistic Chan hermit while the trio reading presents an optimistic Chan hermit. Both of their overall concepts of the poet's life are supported by their own choices of the reading plan to interpret "*gao gao feng ding shang*."

How details in the SP are modulated also conforms with and, therefore, supports the overall image they choose for their Han Shan. Both Waley and Watson translate *zuo* in line three of the ST literally as "sit." As this activity may refer to the Chan cultivating method *zuochan* (literally, sitting Chan meditation),<sup>377</sup> the place this activity takes place certainly implies the level the sitter thinks he has achieved. Waley's hermit seems to be somewhere below the peak and can only "sit and gaze on" the level he fails to reach, while Watson's has obviously reached the top so he

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<sup>377</sup> The Chinese for this term is 坐禪.

can look away “from the summit of the peak.” Waley’s hermit sounds pessimistic in saying “there is distance without end,” while Watson’s declares confidently there is “no limit in sight!” Waley’s hermit then pines for his solitude with four consecutive alliterated a’s in “I am all alone and ...,” resonating loudly with the one in “alone,” while Watson’s states with certainty that no one knows he alone has climbed so high. In Waley, the hermit’s lonely status is elaborated by the apposition of the image of a lonely moon mirrored in the cold spring. The moon is the symbol of the Chan truth<sup>378</sup> but, accompanied by the emotionally charged epithet, “lonely,” it looks more like the embodiment of the hermit’s sadness. Viewed together with its preceding group, i.e. poems 20 to 25 of Waley’s *Han Shan*,<sup>379</sup> this connotation in poem 26 is also aesthetically coherent with the nostalgia. This moon becomes the moon that a homesick traveler often turns to in Tang poetry,<sup>380</sup> instead of the moon a Chan cultivator looks up to. Watson, on the other hand, adopts “solitary,” a more ameliorative epithet of the same status, for the moon and colours his hermitage with hues of confidence and joy. Furthermore, Waley’s moon is only a reflection that is

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<sup>378</sup> In *Lankavatara Sutra*, there is argument on the relationship between the truth or wisdom and the text that explicates it. The moon is compared to the truth, which the wise can see while the ignorant only see the text. This metaphor is used in *The Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra*. When asked by Huineng, the Sixth Master, to explain a passage of sutra, a nun wondered loudly on how could a person understand the sutra without knowing the meaning of the text. Huineng argues the truth in *Sutra* is beyond the text just as the moon is beyond the finger that points at it and one needs not look at the finger when the moon is shown.

<sup>379</sup> See the discussion on overall image of *Han Shan* in Waley’s translation above.

<sup>380</sup> The moon is often a symbol of homesickness in Tang poetry. Examples include Li Bai’s “Thoughts on a Quiet Night” (靜夜思), Du Fu’s “Missing My Brothers on a Full Moon Night” (月夜憶舍弟).



trapped in still water of a pool, while Watson's moon lights up the flowing water of a spring. Waley, by stating "there is not really a moon," implies that the moon, or the Chan truth the hermit has been after for all these years in the mountain, is after all an illusion, while Watson's direct denial, "this is not the moon," presents itself a simple philosophical statement. Each is further supported by an aesthetical coherent complement in their following line. Waley's hermit, disillusioned only after years of quest for Chan epiphany, admits that "the only moon" is high in the sky, beyond his reach. "Only" subtly echoes "lonely" in line four, another stroke of pessimistic colour on his hermit. In contrast, Watson's hermit, knowing the moon is "where it always is," aims at the highest level, "in the sky above," putting forth a positive attitude. At the coda of this poem, Waley's hermit turns to readers, "you," since this poem works as the epilogue of the whole selection, while Watson's hermit, in the sixty-second poem of a collection of one hundred poems, is still at the height of his quest for epiphany and reasonably focuses on himself.

## VII. Equilibration and Articulation

### The Nature of the Contextual Relation

As the relationship between the poestalt and the contextual relation that generates it is like the one between the fish and the fishnet,<sup>381</sup> the object of poetry translation should be the former instead of the latter. However, it is relevant to investigate the nature of the latter—as if to examine and know more of the fish net before starting out to fish. Without the knowledge, one may trap in trying to reproduce the fish net and forget about the fish.

There are two basic types of gestalt phenomena. One is dynamic, demonstrated with stroboscopic movement, where the elements involved show up with a temporal discrepancy and create a phenomenon of movement. The other is static, demonstrated with the Orbison Illusion, where the phenomenon happens when all of the elements involved are viewed altogether at once. In corollary, the contextual relations in a poem may generate poestalts in these two ways: one happens in the process of reading and the other happens when constituents are laid out together in the mind.

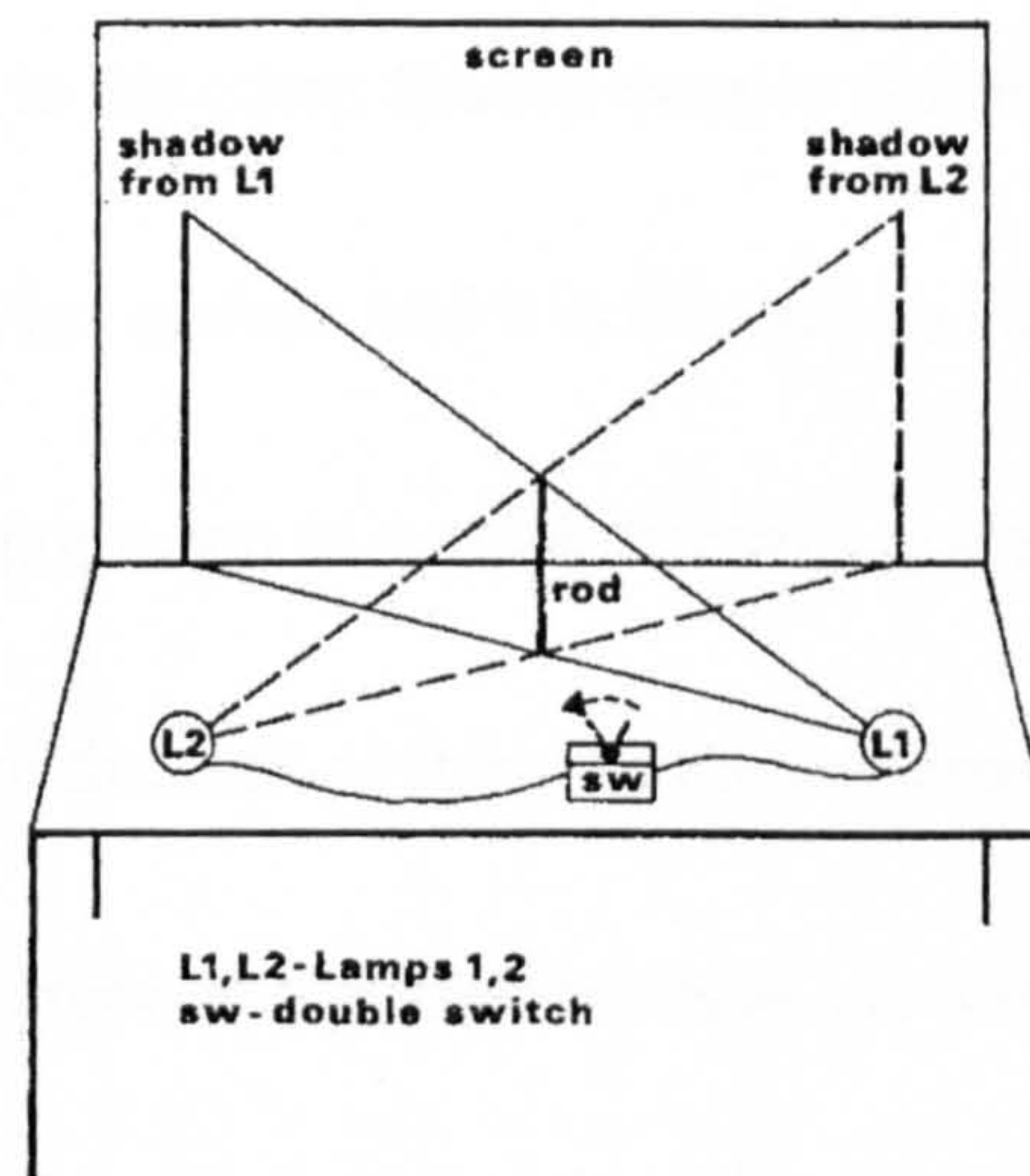
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<sup>381</sup> I.e. 得魚忘荃. The metaphor Zhaung Zi brought up. See Chapter 2.



## Moving Stills: Dynamic Contextual Relations

Stroboscopic movement is a typical example of dynamic gestalt. The following is a device to create this:



(Köhler, *Task 36*)

The circuit is designed in a way so that only one of the two lights, L1 and L2, is supplied with electricity, and the switch in the middle decides which light to be turned on. So, at any moment, only either light is on and a corresponding shadow of the rod is cast onto the screen. Viewers can see the shadow from the other side of the screen.

The experiment goes as follows. One of the lights, for example, L1 is on and the rod's shadow appears on the left half of the screen. When the switch is flipped,



L1 goes off and L2 is turned on. In the meanwhile, the shadow from L1 on the left half of the screen disappears and the rod's shadow appears on the right half of the screen. Factually, what actually happens is only that one light goes off and the other goes on and, simultaneously, that one shadow disappears and the other appears. But to the viewer, it is a different story. He/she "sees" the shadow moving across the screen from one position to the other. He/she *merges* the two phenomena into one event by filling an action in between and it is this action that he/she sees. The movie is an example of this phenomenon in a more dramatic scale. It would not be easy to convince people that all of the actions they see on the screen is only something like a hundred-times-a-minute stroboscopic phenomenon: i.e. a string of freezes that show up on screen one after another and during the brief interval in between there is nothing on the screen. Therefore, the "movie" is not completed until it is in the audience's mind.

There are some contextual relations that generate aesthetic effect only when constituents involved are read through. They happen dynamically like a stroboscopic movement. One of the most typical examples are parallelism, rhyme and rhythm.

### *Parallelsim*

One of Xie Lingyun's famous couplets is a good example to display how the

poetry counterpart of this phenomenon happens. In this case it is, as Joseph J. Lee puts it, “how parallelism can afford a poet the opportunity to manipulate syntax and word class so as to increase the expressive power of his language” (35). The couplet from his poem, “*Ru Peng Li Hu Kou*”<sup>382</sup> (On entering the lake of Peng Li), is presented here with transliteration and gloss:

<i>chun</i>	<i>wan</i>	<i>lū</i>	<i>ye</i>	<i>xiu</i>
spring	evening	green	wilds	charming
<i>yan</i>	<i>gao</i>	<i>bai</i>	<i>yun</i>	<i>tun</i> <sup>383</sup>
rock	high	white	cloud	to gather

The first line literally means, “spring evening, green wilds [is] charming” and the second “rock [is] high, white clouds gather [there].” Both lines are in the 2-3 syntactic structure, conventional for a five character line.<sup>384</sup> As Lee points out, the second line is rather unnatural and seems at first sight that it is so only for the sake of

<sup>382</sup> I.e. 入彭蠡湖口. The poem, twenty lines in all, describes the scenery the poet sees around the entrance of the lake Peng Li on the Yangzi River, the second largest lake attached to the Yangzi River. Sees Xiao Tong 381. The poem starts with six lines of the scenery seen from the boat. The couplet presented here is the seventh and the eighth where the view point starts to shift from water level to hill top, presumably to Mountain Lu, the famous mountainous area adjacent to the area. It is significant that this couplet is followed by a couplet where the poet expresses that his mind is haunted by a thousand thoughts and his days are brimmed with emotions. This renders a basis for my argument that the couplet reflects the difficulties in the poet’s political situation. See Wang 159-163, Chen 143-146 and Gu 191-194.

I agree with Lee on the gloss of most of the characters, except on *xiu*, which he interprets as verb, “enchant.” There is only a blurred line between intransitive verb and adjective in Chinese, in fact between most word classes. While I agree with Lee that *tun* as a verb will change the word class of other characters parallel to it, including *xiu*, I would rather adopt an adjective “charming” to show the crucial ambiguity in word class of Chinese here because there is a possibility that the apparently verbal *tun* could be assumed the word class of adjective for being parallel with an adjective *xiu*.

<sup>383</sup> I.e. 春晚綠野秀石高白雲屯 (Xiao Tong 381).

<sup>384</sup> I.e. the first two characters and the latter three form syntactically independent units.

being parallel with the first line. However, it would become “flat parallelism,”<sup>385</sup> as Liu Xie puts it (*Wenxin* 589), if it were only for parallelism’s sake that Xie composed the line this way—a flaw that a poet like Xie would have avoided. If Xie had been born two centuries earlier, synchronical with Cao Zhi (192-232), generally deemed as one of the greatest poets in Chinese literature, he might have organized this line like the first line of Cao’s famous poem “Seven Sorrows” (Xiao Tong, 329), which is composed of the same syntactic constituents as Xie’s line. The two lines are presented below with firstly the line of Cao, followed by the line that Xie could have produced:

	subject		predicate	
	Adjective	noun	verb	adjective      noun
	<i>ming</i>	<i>yue</i>	<i>zhao</i>	<i>gao</i> <i>lou</i>
	bright	moon	to shine on	high      tower
	<i>bai</i>	<i>yun</i>	<i>tun</i>	<i>gao</i> <i>yan</i> <sup>386</sup>
	white	cloud	to gather on	high      rock

Lee points out that Xie still could have produced something like *gao yan bai yun tun* “[on] high rock, white clouds gather.” The reason why he did not is that the reversion of *gao* and *yan*, according to Lee’s analysis, is the catalyst that works magic. It leads to a more complicated syntax by turning the original one clause (on high rock, white

<sup>385</sup> I.e. 碌碌儷辭.

<sup>386</sup> I.e. 明月照高樓 / 白雲屯高岩 (Xiao Tong 381).



clouds gather) into two clauses (rock [stands] high, white clouds gather). This complication montages another syntax on the first line too. The original “[in] spring evening, green wilds [look] lovely” can also read as “spring [is] waning, green wilds looks lovely.” The ambiguity in the syntax is the basis for fluid contextual relations to be potential. Several overlapping parallelisms in the couplet are triggered and become dynamic contextual relations before and when readers reach the last word *tun*, as if the switch in the experiment is turned for several times and things on the screen move.

From green wilds in spring evening to high rocks to white clouds, a static mountain and water scenery flashes across readers’ imagination like opening a scroll of water painting. A dynamic contextual relation happens when the reading reaches “high.” The noun “evening,” now paralleled by the adjective “high,” metamorphoses into an adjective, “late,” and enriches the couplet with another syntactic possibility. A stroboscopic poestalt happens: the original freeze-frame of the scenery expands into a fleeing passage of time in this scenic location.

On top of this, *tun* at the end can form another parallelism within the line and create more sophisticated stroboscopic contextual relations. The character is comparatively less ambiguous in word class at first sight. By the Han dynasty, it

meant, “gather, accumulate” as a verb or “a village” as a noun.<sup>387</sup> *Bai yun tun*, the latter constituent of the 2-3 structure in the second line can readily be interpreted as “white clouds gather.” It triggers a curious chemistry between all parallelisms in this couplet by adding ambiguity in the word class of other characters parallel to it in the couplet. As *tun*, a verb, is parallel to *gao*, an adjective, as Lee explicates, the latter character in retrospect becomes more than a static quality, “being high,” but an action too, “stands high” or “rises high.” In corollary, since *gao* is parallel to *wan*, similar chemistry takes place and turns the originally static time span, “spring late” into a moving time flow, “spring wanes.”

While Lee focuses on how among *tun* and *gao* and *wan* the word class of one character can retrospectively enrich another through parallelism, there is one parallelism he curiously leaves out of the investigation: *xiu* and *tun*, a foregrounded parallelism in the couplet for being at a foregrounded position, the end of the line. This parallelism, in fact, produces association and intertextuality that expresses more subtly and yet more deeply the poet’s thoughts and feelings. Lee has presented how a character more semantically dynamic can transmit this quality to those more semantically static. In fact, it can happen the other way round at the same time. Since the mind of the reader perceives the two images holistically, the influence can

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<sup>387</sup> See the entry of 屯 in Gao and San Min.

happen in both directions at the same time.

The parallelism of *xiu*, technically an adjective, meaning “lovely,” “charming,”<sup>388</sup> with *tun*, technically a verb, invites the adjective side of the latter character, *zhun (tun)*,<sup>389</sup> meaning “of difficult situation,” to montage upon the verb side which is originally dominant here. The ideogram of *zhun (tun)* on bronze pictures a germinating seed struggling to break through the earth, with the root twisting in agony beneath.<sup>390</sup> It signifies “being in a difficult situation,” as the etymologist Xu Shen<sup>391</sup> (30-124 AD) interprets it. This meaning of the character is adopted directly in “*zhun nan ji yun kang*”<sup>392</sup> (As disasters have been expelled) from Xie’s “*Shu Zu De Shi Er Shou*”<sup>393</sup> (Two Poems on the Virtue of My Ancestors) where *zhun (tun)* pairs with *nan*, “hardship,” forming a bi-character phrase for “disaster.”<sup>394</sup> This meaning of *zhun (tun)* is implied in “*tun yun bi ceng ling*”<sup>395</sup> (gathering clouds cover layers of hills) from “*Xi Ling Yu Feng Xian Kang Le*”<sup>396</sup> (Caught in a Gail at Xi Ling) by Xie Huilian<sup>397</sup> where *tun* is connected to *yun*

<sup>388</sup> Lee glosses this character as a verb, “enchants,” and fails to see more possibility in a position more prominent in the couplet.

<sup>389</sup> When this character means “in difficult situation” it is pronounced as *zhun*, still conforms to the original rhyme scheme. This pronunciation is presented here as *zhun(tun)* when it is pronounced as *zhun* to avoid misunderstanding for other homophonic characters.

<sup>390</sup>  See *tun/zhun* 屯 in Gao.

<sup>391</sup> I.e. 許慎.

<sup>392</sup> I.e. 屯難既云康 (Xiao Tong, 274).

<sup>393</sup> I.e. 述祖德詩二首 (Xiao Tong, 273-74).

<sup>394</sup> See Gu 108, note 29.

<sup>395</sup> I.e. 屯雲蔽曾嶺 (Xiao Tong, 363).

<sup>396</sup> I.e. 西陵遇風獻康樂 (Xiao Tong, 363-64).

<sup>397</sup> I.e. 謝惠連 (407-33, late East Jin dynasty), who was a younger cousin from father’s side of Xie



(clouds) as an adjective to mean “gathering clouds” and implying “obstacle” or “ominous situation.” The line describes how the clouds block the hills, paralleled with the image of a dangerously turbulent river, causing difficulty on a journey. In addition, this character stands for the third hexagram following the first, *qian* the heaven, and the second, *kun* the earth, in *the Book of changes*, symbolizing the difficulty the life encounters when it is conceived in the union of the heaven and the earth (Guo 1-39). It is the central classic of the Age of Metaphysics, ranging from the Wei dynasty (220-265) through the West Jin dynasty (265-316) to the East Jin dynasty (317-419), covering the whole of the beginning and the prime time of Xie’s literary career. Therefore, this allusion should be ready in mind when Xie adopts it in his poetry.

Since the line “rock [rises] high, white clouds dwell” may reasonably “[suggest] an association between the white clouds and the poet’s own unsullied person” (Lee 34), it is relevant to point out that Xie, a direct descent from one of the leading noble families of the East Jin dynasty and having enjoyed the title of Duke of Kang Le since an early age, found himself in a dangerously awkward position when the East Jin dynasty was overtaken by the Liu Song dynasty (420-478) even when he had pledged his loyalty to the usurpers. His misery climaxed in his exile to and

execution in Canton as a victim of political struggle.<sup>398</sup> Therefore, the line implies the white clouds dwells on the high rock is actually suffering for this position even when they are white. Additionally, *ye* in the first line of the couplet connotes the status of common people in contrast to *chao*, “the court.”<sup>399</sup> With this association, the waning spring gains a symbolic meaning of a deteriorating political environment, which becomes dangerous, while the life of common people may seem “lovely” and desirable, an acute irony dawning on Xie when he was there on a boat at the entrance of the lake.

### *Rhyme and Rhythm*

The following are two versions of the famous “meaningless” sentence, *Colourless green ideas sleep furiously*, advances by Noam Chomsky in different arrangements. Arrangement A is by Susan Bassnett and arrangement B by the thesis:

#### Arrangement A:

Colourless

Green ideas

Sleep

Furiously

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<sup>398</sup> There has been argument whether Xie actually planned rebellion against the new rulers. He certainly expressed his resent against the usurpers in certain works. It can be sure that the new rulers would eliminate figures with the status of Xie from the political map when the time came. See Birrel 352 and Huazheng 348.

<sup>399</sup> I.e. 朝. See the entry in Sanmin and Gao.

(Bassnett, *Translation* 104).

Arrangement B:

Colorless green

Ideas sleep

Furiously

Explaining how arrangement can be meaningful, Bassnett states, “the apparent lack of logical harmony between the elements of the sentence could become acceptable, since each ‘line’ would add an idea and the overall meaning would derive from the association of illogical elements in a seemingly logical regular structure. The meaning, therefore, would not be *content bound*, but would be *sign bound*, in that both the individual words and the association of ideas would accumulate meaning as the poem is read” (Bassnett, *Translation* 103-04). In fact, what has also changed when the line is rearranged into the two versions here is that different dynamic contextual relations become possible and different poestalts may happen.<sup>400</sup>

Arrangement A is composed of five lines of irregular number of syllables, from none to four, and arrangement B three tetra-syllabic lines. Different metric patterns and rhyme schemes happen in each version. They happen in these

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<sup>400</sup> There are two reasons why two different rearranged versions of the original text are adopted for comparison instead of comparing the original one and a rearranged version. One is that the thesis means to foreground the significance of arrangement. Therefore, two different arrangements are more relevant. It will be demonstrated how different dynamic contextual relations emerge when the layout is changed. Another is that this thesis means to avoid the polemics of whether the original text is “meaningless” or not linguistically, an issue not relevant to the thesis. The thesis means to point out that the differences in aesthetic effect between the two layouts are beyond question, an issue that the thesis is attacking.



arrangements just as the stroboscopic movement happens when every piece of equipment of the experiment is properly arranged and operated.<sup>401</sup> Overlapping one another, poestalts of rhythmic and rhyming effects become audible to the ear as the lines are read through, just as the stroboscopic movement in the movie becomes apparent when one still follows another.

Arrangement A: In the contextual relation between “colourless” and “Furious-,” when readers through the two, the dactylic parallelism sounds. In the one between “green i-” and “-dea” in line two, two marching trochees becomes audible when the line is read through. In the one between lines one and two, rhyming happens when “-as” shows up echoing “-ess” read in line one as the second shadow on the screen appears after the first is gone. In the one between lines one, three and four, another rhyming, a slant and therefore more subtle, happens when “-sly” at the end of the poem is read, recalling the similarity to the two preceeding, i.e. “-less,” “slee-.” Another contextual relation becomes clear when the three soft steps of feminine ending at lines 1, 2 and 5, offset the only heavy stomp of the masculine ending of line three, “sleep.”

Arrangement B: Reading through “green” and “sleep,” a eye and slant rhyme happens. Another slant rhyme happens in the same way between “sleep” and “-sly.”

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<sup>401</sup> Unlike a reproduction of stroboscopic movement, whose success is right there on the screen to see, whether these two arrangements are really aesthetically effective is open to interpretation and argument.

Reading through all of them, readers “see” two one dynamic contextual relation emerges and transforms into a different one. In a way, all of the three lines also slantly rhyme with one another (“-een,” “-eeps” and “-y”). Another contextual relation of repeated pause pattern forms when readers hear how the second line conforms with the first. Both pause before the last syllable.

While reading, readers listen to these consecutive sounds appearing and disappearing in the ear as if shadows on the screen in the experiment of stroboscopic movement. Different audial actions happen as demonstrated above. Each of them and the aesthetic effect emerging holistically from them, if there is any, is a poestalt that happens only in the ear of the reader, since the arrangements, composed of exactly the same words and order, are not read differently but listened to differently.<sup>402</sup> It is like the “movement” of the shadow on the screen, which is not on the screen but only in the eye of the viewer, not because the two shadows does anything themselves but because they are watched in that certain setting.

## The Relief Effect: A Static Contextual Relation

The static gestalts are those which emerge when the constituents involved are viewed simultaneously. There are two types of them: one is relief effect<sup>403</sup> and the

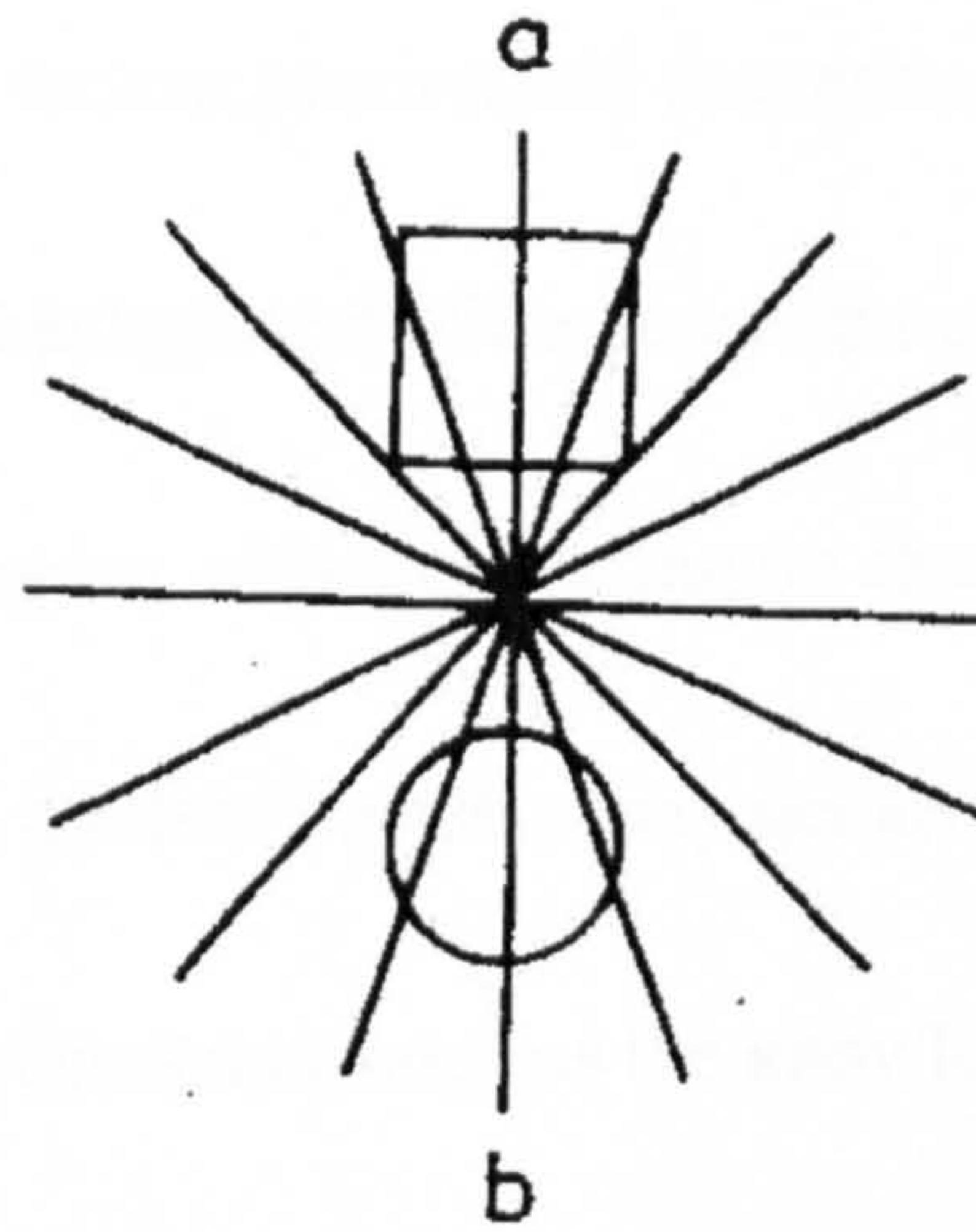
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<sup>402</sup> In fact, this provides another footnote of how readers are creatively involved.

<sup>403</sup> The situation mentioned here may be similar to (but different from) the figure-ground relationship,



other is puzzle effect. The relief effect can be exemplified by The Orbison Illusion, provided below:



The Orbison Illusion

(Harré, 653)

A perfect square and a perfect circle are overlapped by a set of radiating spokes.

When the figures and the background are viewed simultaneously, an effect only in the viewer's mind happens. As shown in The Orbison Illusion, the lower half of the square seems larger than the upper half while the upper curve of the circle seems flatter than the lower curve.

As reading does not happen in a vacuum, there will never be a reading without one or more backgrounds of some kind, objective or subjective ones.

Explaining how music may sound different in aesthetic quality to listeners, Arnheim

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such as the Rubin Vase exemplifying. The similarity is that one needs to be offset by the other. The difference is that in the relief effect, which the thesis focuses, one element functions purely as background and the other as the figure while in situation such as the Rubin Vase both elements can function as background for the other and figure in itself.



points out: "Mozart's music may appear serene and cheerful to a modern listener, who perceives it in the temporal context of twentieth-century music, whereas it conveyed the expression of violent passion and desperate suffering to his contemporaries against the background of the music they knew" ("Gestalt Theory" 167). However, the thesis argues, although having no chance to experience that objective context in person, modern listeners may get access to part of this background through indirect contacts, such as the knowledge of that background or a comprehensive listening to Mozart and Mozart's contemporary composers. This can exempt modern listeners from appreciating Mozart completely from the temporal context of twentieth-century music and add insights in relation to how well they know and/or empathize with the composer. Like the knowledge, learning and memory of one listener may vary from another, this element complicate the situation due to the elusiveness of this input.

There can be a subjective side to this element. Another example Arnheim advances is demonstrative here. He argues, "When we observe the gentle curve of a coachman's whip while being aware at the same time of the aggressive use of the object, the resulting experience clearly contains an element of contradiction" (Arnheim, "Gestalt Theory" 167). The thesis argues that the contradiction emerges only when the curve is associated to objects of gentle nature, such as the curve of

willow blanches in the breeze, and thus interpreted as gentle. But all objects with curve are not gentle. A viewer may choose to associate the curve to that of a cobra ready to attack or of relentless tsunami, just to name two, and see in the curve of a whip two different types of aggressiveness that these two images justify.

Therefore, any reading is like viewing the square and the circle that always come with a set of radiating spikes to transform their comprehension. In addition, in the appreciation of a work of art, either visual, auditory or literary, the situation is more elusive than viewing a two-dimensional figure in two ways. Firstly, the background upon which a work of literary art may vary among viewers and in each individual appreciation instead of an objective unchanging pattern. Secondly, the work and the background cannot be clearly distinguished as in this presentation, i.e. the square and the set of radiating spikes. What is certain is that the background forms a significant element to the appreciation of the work itself. "In Gestalt terms, past experience, knowledge, learning, and memory are considered as factors of the temporal context in which a given phenomenon appears" (Arnheim, "Gestalt Theory" 166).

### *One Figure, Different Relives*

Wang Wei (ca 700-761 AD), one of the greatest poets of the Tang dynasty

and a master in both art and music, was also known for his life-long affinity to Buddhism, which along with his poetic achievement won him the title of “Poetry Buddha.” With this background, which is unique among the greatest Chinese poets, Wang is one of the typical cases where the relief effect can hoard relevant significance in interpreting the work. The translation of the moon image in “*Zhu Li Guan*,” a five-character *juejue* of Wang Wei, is an example. It may create different aesthetic effects when Wang Wei is viewed as a Buddhist, a Daoist, a Confucian scholar or a combination of them.

The influence of Wang’s Buddhist belief on his poetry may be more apparent, especially in his later works,<sup>404</sup> such as *Wangchuan Ji*<sup>405</sup> (An Anthology of the River Wang), to which “*Zhu Li Guan*”<sup>406</sup> (Bamboo Woods House) belongs. Criticism of his poetry ranges from treating this background as a minor feature to one as the keynote of his poetry. The former focuses on the amazing saturation of “flavour” in its seeming simplicity. Fu Donghua’s remark provides an example: “There is no profound philosophical exploration in Wang Wei’s poetry, neither any passion. Its merit is all about its subtle but never ending flavour ... Readers will not get lost in vain chase for meanings if they focus on savouring its ‘flavour’.”<sup>407</sup> Buddhism, here,

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<sup>404</sup> [A short introduction of the evolution of Wang’s style in poetry to come]

<sup>405</sup> I.e. 輞川集. The *wang*, 輞, in the River Wang is a different, unrelated character from his surname, 王.

<sup>406</sup> I.e. 竹里館.

<sup>407</sup> I.e. 王維的詩不不寓含什麼深奧的哲理，也不含什麼濃烈的感情，好處只在一種清淡而深長



is only hinted at as a profound philosophy, a distraction which may lead readers on a philosophical wild goose chase. Though Fu points out the fact in the same essay that Buddhist belief is one of the three crucial elements in Wang's background,<sup>408</sup> he argues that Buddhism mainly helps shape his successful surviving strategy in a hostile political environment and, remotely, adds a transcendental flavour to his style. Wang's title of "Poetry Buddha," means in the mind of Chinese critics "a pious Buddhist who happens to write great poetry" instead of "a poet who writes great religious poetry that qualifies him the title." In Fu's opinion, readers should not focus on this trait of Wang in appreciating Wang's poems lest they miss the poetry in his poems completely.

The other extreme believes Wang owe all his poetic achievement to Buddhism. Burton Watson, for example, says, "With Wang Wei, ..., we come to a writer whose entire poetic output has been characterized as so many sermons on the Buddhist faith" (Watson 198). In Watson's opinion, Wang's belief becomes the fountain of his creativity and the purpose of his poetry. This statement overlooks the fact that it can also be argued that the abstract beauty in Wang Wei comes from his ability as a painter, to be more specific as the founder of the school of Mountain and

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的趣味。...讀者果能拿住這個「味」字去讀王維的詩，當不至走入迷路。(Fu 7).

<sup>408</sup> The other two are that Wang earned literary reputation fairly early in life and that Wang was also a great artist. In Fu's opinion, Buddhism helps shape his successful strategy in surviving in a hostile political environment and, indirectly, adds a transcendental character to his style.

Water Painting. Watson also overlooks the fact that this style had already appeared in his early poems, such as “*da muo gu yan zhi/ chang he luo ri yuan*”<sup>409</sup> (in a vast desert, a lone smoke looks perfectly straight up/ upon a long, winding river, the setting sun looks perfectly round) (Fu 56), “*jiang liu tian di wai/ shan se you wu zhong*”<sup>410</sup> (the Long River seems to reach beyond the horizon/ the colour of the mountain is barely visible) (Fu 52), when Wang Wei still aspired for a successful political career instead of a reclusive life in Buddhism. Even in *An Anthology of the River Wang*, composed late in his life, the subjects of Wang’s poems range from arguably Buddhist religious observation, like “*Lu Zhai*” (deer park),<sup>411</sup> pure visual art in literary form such as “*Ping Chi*” (duckweed pond),<sup>412</sup> Daoist mythology such as “*Jin Xue Quan*” (fountain of gold sand),<sup>413</sup> to literary allusions of *The Songs of the South* such as “*Jiao Yuan*” (pepper parden),<sup>414</sup> to name a few.

Different translations often shows only partial emphasis on part of Wang’s complicated background, especially the later works composed by the more religious Wang who spent his life alternately between seclusion and office.<sup>415</sup> The translations

<sup>409</sup> I.e. 大漠孤煙直長河落日圓.

<sup>410</sup> I.e. 江流天地外山色有無中.

<sup>411</sup> I.e. 鹿柴. The poem: 空山不見人但聞人語響返影入深林復照青苔上 (Fu 71).

<sup>412</sup> I.e. 萍池. The poem: 春池深且廣會待輕舟迴靡靡綠萍合垂楊掃復開 (Fu 77).

<sup>413</sup> I.e. 金屑泉. The poem: 日飲金屑泉足當千餘歲翠鳳翊文螭羽節朝玉帝 (Fu 73).

<sup>414</sup> I.e. 椒園. The poem: 桂尊迎帝子杜若贈佳人椒漿奠瑤席欲下雲中君 (Fu 75).

<sup>415</sup> Wang Wei was often grouped together with Tao Yuanming (372-427 AD) and Meng Haoran (689-740 AD), two major poets in Chinese literature, for he shared their style and disinterest in politics, but he certainly did not share their 境遇 in political life as some critics may presume, such as Herber G. Giles. Giles thought, “After a short spell of official life, he too retired into seclusion and occupied himself with poetry and with the consolations of Buddhism, in which he was a firm

of “*Zhu Li Guan*” adopted for case study later offer an example where these readings of the poet’s background collide. The poem is displayed below with the literal translation of each line on the first column from the right and the transliteration accompanied by glossing of each character:<sup>416</sup>

The transliteration and glossing					Literal translation
<i>du</i>	<i>zuo</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>huang</i>	<i>li</i>	Sitting alone in deep
alone	to sit	dark, quiet	bamboo	inside	bamboo woods
<i>tan</i>	<i>qin</i>	<i>fu</i>	<i>chang</i>	<i>xiao</i>	Playing the qin and
to play	a plucking	at the same	long	to chant	singing
	instrument	time; again			
<i>shen</i>	<i>lin</i>	<i>ren</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>zhi</i>	Deep woods, no one
deep	woods	people	not	know	knows it
<i>ming</i>	<i>yue</i>	<i>lai</i>	<i>xiang</i>	<i>zhao</i>	The moon comes to
bright	the moon	to come	mutually	to shine	shine on me

(Fu Donghua, *Wang* 74)

The major themes and images in the poem include spending the night alone in the

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believer.”(Giles 149-50)

As an imperial official, Wang Wei was not interested in climbing the political ladder. What he wanted from the position seemed very probably only a respectable social status along with an easy way of living, both of which a literatus could hardly find elsewhere in ancient China. It was a sweet irony that with such small ambition he should land on a higher position nearly every time he returned to office under imperial order out of seclusion or pardon out of banishment and reached as high as vice prime minister before his death. Why he should enjoy the 境遇 that his two peers in Chinese literature did not may be more than simple luck. Wang

<sup>416</sup> The text of the SP:

獨坐幽篁裡  
彈琴復長嘯  
深林人不知  
明月來相照



woods, a hermit literatus being overheard while performing on a musical instrument, the musical instrument *qin*, the moon. Each of these suggests elements of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. As a result, it can be read through concepts of Confucianism, Taoism or Buddhism and displays different aesthetic effects offset on different backgrounds.

In Confucianism, music was part of the character cultivation for literati.<sup>417</sup>

Music was one of the major criteria Confucius adopted to evaluate improvements in morality and character.<sup>418</sup> As a result, there is a tradition for the Confucian literatus to practice *qin* as part of his character refinement as an intellectual as well as a form of manifestation of his own virtue and faculty. As stated in the preface to "Ode to *Qin*"<sup>419</sup> by Xi Kang (224-63 AD), the instrument was deemed to be the one with the highest virtue over other instruments, superior in its function of character improvement for the player. Performance becomes an indicator of performer's virtue and the instrument becomes a symbol of virtue.<sup>420</sup> Literati in retirement, exile or

<sup>417</sup> Music is included in the basis education, *liu yi* 六藝 (the six arts), in the Zhou dynasty, regulated explicitly in the related chapters in both *Ritual of the Zhou Dynasty* (《周禮·保氏》: 養國子以道乃教之六藝一曰五禮二曰六樂三曰五射四曰五馭五曰六書六曰九數. See Lin Yin 139) and *Book of Ritual* (禮記地官司徒第二: 以鄉三物教萬民而賓興之一曰六德 ... 六行 ... 六藝). See Wang Mengou 99.

<sup>418</sup> See the chapters of "Tai Buo, the Eighth," "Xian Jin, the Eleventh," "Yang Huo, the Seventeenth" of *Lu Yu*, i.e. *The Analects*.

<sup>419</sup> The preface is cited here: 余少好音聲長而翫之以爲物有盛衰而此無變滋味有馱而此不倦可以導養神氣宣和情志處窮獨而不悶者莫近于音聲也是故復之而不足則吟詠以肆志吟詠之不足則寄言以廣意然八音之器歌舞之象歷世之才並爲之賦頌其體制風流莫不相襲稱其材幹則以危苦爲上賦其聲音則以悲哀爲主美其感化則以垂涕爲貴麗則麗矣然未盡其理也推其所由似元不解音聲覽其旨趣亦未達禮樂之情也眾器之中琴德最優故綴敘所懷以爲之賦. See Xiao Tong 255-59.

<sup>420</sup> As stated in the conclusion of "Ode to *Qin*": "悵悵琴德不可測兮體清心遠邈難及兮良質美手遇

between offices played the instrument as a regular self-refining practice, and often in a natural context. This practice can be traced back at least to the East Zhou dynasty (ca 200-600 BC). The motif of a hermit literatus playing *qin* outside and at night and encountering a soul mate originates in an anecdote from *Lüshi Chun Qiu*<sup>421</sup> (The History by Prime Minister Lü) (third century BC) of the *qin* master Yu Buoya<sup>422</sup> who met his soul mate Zhong Ziqi<sup>423</sup> when the latter happened to overhear the former performing in the woods.<sup>424</sup> This tradition and the motif from this anecdote together intertextualize poems with similar motives.

However, the player in “*Zhu Li Guan*” might also be enjoying the incident as a Daoist thinker. As improvisation is a crucial element in the technique of *qin*, it was also adopted by Taoism as its instrument for cultivation.<sup>425</sup> In the Tang dynasty, Daoist priests also used the instrument as a means of manifesting their achievement in Tao cultivation.<sup>426</sup> Li Bai<sup>427</sup> once composed two lyrics for the instrument, “*Fei*

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今世兮紛綸翕響冠眾藝兮識音者稀孰能珍兮能盡雅琴唯至人兮。” See Xiao Tong 259.

<sup>421</sup> I.e. 呂氏春秋.

<sup>422</sup> I.e. 俞伯牙.

<sup>423</sup> I.e. 鍾子期.

<sup>424</sup> The story also appeared in *Lie Zi* 列子. See the chapter *Tang Wen* 湯問 in *Lie Zi*.

<sup>425</sup> This fact may seem at first a cultural irony since Taoism has assumed an ideological position opposite to Confucianism and both should value highly the same instrument. One may find similar case in *The Book of Change* that both Confucians and Taoists regard it as their major classic.

<sup>426</sup> Following are a few examples, whose dates range from the early to late Tang dynasty [arranged according to the life span of the poets]. In his “哭道士劉得無” (An Elegy to Daoist Liu Dewu), Shen Quanqi 沈佺期 [656-714] wrote, 花月留丹洞, 琴笙閣翠微 (the flowers and the moon in the scarlet cave, while *qin* and *sheng* [a wind instrument] in the emerald mountain mist) (*Quan Tang Shi* 246). In his “張山人彈琴” (Litsening to Daoist Hermit Zhang Play the *Qin*), Chang Jian 常建 [ca first half of the eighth century] wrote that how the music had cleansed his mind and how the music lingered even longer after he left. The text is offered here: 君去芳草綠西峰彈玉琴豈維丘中賞兼得清煩襟朝從山口還出嶺聞清音了然雲霞氣照見天地心玄鶴下澄空翩翩舞松林改弦和商聲又聽飛龍吟稍覺此身妄漸知仙事深其將鍊金鼎永矣投吾簪 (*Quan Tang Shi* 333). In his “A Poem

*Long Yin*<sup>428</sup> (Song of Flying Dragon) and as Taoism often functions as a philosophical supplement to Confucianism, Confucian literati who were banished or intended to maintain their spiritual freedom played the instrument in the Daoist way.

On the other hand, in the Tang dynasty, it also became a rather common practice among Buddhist monks to play the instrument.<sup>429</sup> In addition, the sitting meditation was adopted by both Taoism and Chinese Buddhism. In “*Da Zhong Shi*”<sup>430</sup> (The Great Master) of *Zhuang Zi*, the method is termed *zuowang*, literally to sit and forget, which means to meditate till one transcends physical form and combines with the universe and therefore the Way.<sup>431</sup> When one achieves that level, the elements become the person’s peer and the universe, represented by the moon here, may assume humanity as the person can therefore blend and merge with the whole universe. On the other hand, the moon in the cult of Chan<sup>432</sup> of the Tang

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inspired by Engraving Daoist Liu’s poem” (刻劉道士詩因而繼作), Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 [709-85] wrote his admiration to the Taoist, “金气騰为虎琴台化若神” (the golden *qi* turns into tiger, and the platform where you played seemed to assume supernatural aura) (*Quan Tang Shi* 361). In his “Dedicated to Daoist Zhang,” Jia Dao 賈島 [779-843] wrote, “新歲抱琴何處去 洛陽三十六峰西” (When the new year arrived, where to have you gone with your *qin* among the thirty six peaks west of Luo Yan?) (*Quan Tang Shi* 1471)

<sup>427</sup> I.e. 李白. Traditionally, transliterated in to Li Bai.

<sup>428</sup> I.e. 飛龍引. See *Quan Tang Shi* 383.

<sup>429</sup> In Li Bai’s 聽蜀僧濬彈琴 (Listening to Monk Rui Play *Qin*), we see a monk who is a virtuoso of this instrument. Li Bai describes that the music performed by the Monk sounds like wind blowing through pines of ten thousand valleys and cleanse the poet’s heart. The poem: 蜀僧抱綠綺西下峨嵋峰爲我一揮手如聞萬壑松客心洗流水餘響入霜鐘不覺暮山碧秋雲暗幾重. See Fu Donghua, *Li Bai Shi* 152.

<sup>430</sup> I.e. 大宗師.

<sup>431</sup> Zhuang Zi uses an anecdote of Confucius and his disciple Yan Hui to present his idea of “sit and forget.” See the chapter of “The Great Master” (大宗師) of *Zhuang Zi*.

<sup>432</sup> Both “chan” and “zen” are the transliteration of the same Chinese character, 禪. Different transliterations are used here to reflect the situation that the concept of this character evolved differently in its Chinese and Japanese branches.



dynasty, the direct ancestor of Zen in Japan, stands for the mind where the Way is.

The sitting meditation may equally be Buddhist as Daoist. The moon shining clear and bright in this view becomes a symbol for epiphany on the Way in Chan.

Therefore, to sit meditating with the moon shining brightly overhead signifies achievement in the practitioner.

In addition to *zuo* and *qin*, which are related to Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. *Xiang* (literally, mutually or to each other) often connotes an emotional involvement in the interacting parties and, therefore in this poem, the personification of the moon. *Zhao*, besides meaning to shine on, is associated with character phrases like *guanzhao*<sup>433</sup> (literally, caring), *zhaomian*<sup>434</sup> (literally, greeting), which further enlivens the character of the moon in the poem. *Shen lin* in the third line of the ST means more a neutral information of the location, i.e. “a deep woods,” than a conditioning statement, i.e. “as the woods is deep, ....” If the order of the two characters is reversed and becomes *lin shen*, then this means more specifically “the woods are so deep that ...” In other words, it can mean at least the following statements: that the speaker is not seen because the woods are deep; that the speaker is in a dense forest unknown to the world; or mere parallel facts that the woods are deep and it happens that no one is there to know about the presence of the speaker. If

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<sup>433</sup> I.e. 關照.

<sup>434</sup> I.e. 照面.

the character order is *lin shen ren bu zhi*, it would be more definite that the line means that the woods are so deep that they conceal the presence of the speaker.

All these form an organic prism of ambiguity, which belongs to the first type of ambiguity defined by William Empson,<sup>435</sup> that allows lights of different backgrounds to shine through it and emit different combination of poetic qualities. A consistent background proves a decisive mechanism in the translational decision-making that brings aesthetic coherence in the TP, which serves as a partial resurrection of the holistic aesthetic quality of the SP that cannot be maintained in TP. This will be demonstrated with the following translations.

In the translation of Burton Watson, the Buddhist side of Wang Wei is hinted at with the literal transference of the activity of sitting meditation and emphasis of the illumination on the moon. This side is expressed even more explicitly in Gary Snyder.<sup>436</sup> Their translations are provided below:

Alone I sit in dark bamboo,  
strumming the lute, whistling away;  
deep woods that no one knows,  
where a bright moon comes to shine on me.

(Watson, *Columbia* 201)

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<sup>435</sup> See chapter 1 of *Seven Types of Ambiguity* by William Empson.

<sup>436</sup> In fact, both Watson and Snyder have studied Zen in Japan. See Kahn np. This certainly explains the existence of the Buddhist element in their TP's. However, it cannot explain how their TP's are aesthetically effective. In other words, the poestalt in their translations come from their faculty as competent poetry translators, instead of their background of Buddhists. Therefore, the investigation will focus on the concepts of poestalt.

Sitting alone, hid in bamboo  
 Plucking the lute and gravely whistling.  
 People wouldn't know that deep woods  
 Can be this bright [sic] in the moon.

(Snyder in Weinberger, *New Directions* 67)

Watson endows *zuo*, the activity of sitting, with substantial attention by translating it as the only verb in the major syntactic structure of his mono-sentence translation. This emphasis implies that it is more than a casual posture. Offset by Wang's Buddhist belief, the activity assumes a religious connotation as *zuo chan*<sup>437</sup> (sitting for Chan) which Wang in fact practiced on regular basis in this stage of his life.<sup>438</sup> In Snyder, the sitting activity is foregrounded with its position at the head of the poem and the speaker deliberately "hide" away from the world, a conduct that echoes that of the Chan cult founder Bodhidharma<sup>439</sup> who stayed in a cave in isolation for nine years facing a wall for enlightenment.<sup>440</sup> While the moon in Watson still retains its otherness from the speaker, Snyder highlights the ignorance of the world of the brightness that one can find sitting in the woods. This shift in perspective here coheres with the religious association in the first half of his translation. The foregrounded parallelism of "in bamboo" and "in the moon" reinforces the contrast of the speaker's physical and spiritual status, the latter of

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<sup>437</sup> I.e. 坐禪.

<sup>438</sup> See the introduction by Fu, p4.

<sup>439</sup> I.e. 達摩.

<sup>440</sup> See Shi Puji scroll 1.



which is beyond the faculty of the unenlightened minds as *ren bu zhi* in the third line of SP also implies. These shifts and arrangements still fit well within the semantic compass of the SP from its linguistic ambiguity but the resonance they create produces one of the most distinct and moving Buddhist images among the translations of this poem.<sup>441</sup>

The translations by Herbert G. Giles and Witter Bynner share some common points that their speaker in the poem is more a Tao Yuanming,<sup>442</sup> a model Confucian literatus in seclusion or a Daoist who cultivates for the level of “*tian ren he yi*”<sup>443</sup> (uniting with Nature), rather than a Buddhist monk. Their translations are listed as follows:

Beneath the bamboo grove, alone,  
I seize my lute and sit and croon;  
No ear to hear me, save mine own:  
No eye to see me—save the moon.

(Giles 150)

Leaning alone in the close bamboos,  
I am playing my lute and humming a song  
Too softly for anyone to hear—  
Except my comrade, the bright moon.”

(Bynner 154)

<sup>441</sup> In Snyder's translation of Lu Zhai, another poem in this anthology by Wang, similar emphasis on the Buddhist side of the poet is as apparent but aesthetically effective. See Weinberger, *Nineteen Ways* pp 42-3.

<sup>442</sup> The great poet of the Jin dynasty who is often regarded as predecessor to Wang Wei and highly esteemed for his poems on the rural life of a literatus without office and his simple style with lasting poetic flavor.

<sup>443</sup> I.e. 天人合一. See the chapter of 齊物論 “*Qi Wu Run*” of 莊子 *Zhuang Zi*.

Firstly, they both treat the character *zuo* in the first line as a generic expression for being somewhere instead of sitting, which may imply sitting meditation. Bynner's speaker even chooses a relaxed posture of "leaning." And, both choose a rural term for the bamboo woods the speaker is in. Secondly, with "croon"<sup>444</sup> and "humming," both have the speakers in the poem making voices of enjoyment, a contrast to Snyder's serious "gravely whistling" and Watson's rather non-specific (at least up to this point of the poem) "whistling." In addition, Gile's "seize" is intertextualized by the famous Latin motto, *carpe diem*—enjoy the day while you have the chance.

It is in the handling of the *ren bu zhi*<sup>445</sup> in the third line of SP that distinguishes these translators whether they see the poem with a Buddhist background or a Daoist/Confucian one. Both Watson and Snyder keep the literal meaning of the character phrase *bu zi*, "ignorant," which implies the status of non-enlightenment of the world. Giles and Bynner, on the other hand, both interpret the status as "unaware," i.e. the world fails to notice the speaker. Giles foregrounds the intimacy between the human speaker and the non-human moon by rhyming of "croon" and

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<sup>444</sup> See the entry in *Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Diction*. Definition 2 a : to make a continued moaning sound \*with the doctor's fiddle crooning away down the corridor Hervey Allen\* \*the wind crooning in the trees\*; specifically: to sing in a gentle murmuring manner and often wordlessly \*croon over a baby\*

<sup>445</sup> I.e. *ren* 人, *bu* 不, *zhi* 知.

“moon.” This reinforces the romantic Daoist thought of making friends with the heavenly body.<sup>446</sup> Bynner makes a similar point but much more explicitly: his speaker simply treats the moon as his bosom friend and sings to none else but his comrade moon. Upon a background of either the Chan branch of Buddhism or the Daoist idea of the ideal relationship between the nature and the human being, the two groups of translators achieve aesthetic coherence among their interpretations of the motif and images.

## Yin and Yang of the Contextual Relation

### Dynamic AND Static

As Arnheim points out, “[r]ather than limiting itself to offering a method of combining and segregating perceptual shapes, Gestalt Theory is concerned primarily with the complex dynamics of organization in field situations, be they physical or psychological. This dynamic is not fully described by the tendency toward simple, regular, symmetrical structure but requires acknowledgment of a countertendency that meets tension reduction with tension enhancement” (*Arnheim, two faces* 823).

While one is seeing the most clear-cut image, i.e. the gestalt, in a figure, there is another process taking place synchronically in the viewer’s mind: the dynamic

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<sup>446</sup> An intertextuality with Li Bai “Drinking Alone under the Moon.” Two poems are also close in time.



interaction between the constituents. Under an aesthetically coherent energetic pattern, i.e. a gestalt seen, lies a fluid, organic relation between the constituents.<sup>447</sup>

With a shift in the approach to or the assortment of contextual relations observed, a different poestalt emerges with new aesthetic energy. As Arnheim points out:

This aesthetic aspect of shape formation, familiar to every artist but active in all perception, characterizes perceptual shape as the product of a highly dynamic process, in which a tendency toward tension-increasing articulation interacts with the countertendency toward equilibration in each case. ... This world of tension-increasing stimuli, the carrier of [23] environmental information, is subjected to the shaping efforts of the equilibrating force, which simplifies and clarifies the incoming raw material.

(*Two Faces* 822-23)

The tension-reducing equilibration and tension-increasing articulation in the forming of a gestalt is like the two sides of a coin, Yin and Yang that form a *Taiji*.<sup>448</sup> The *Yang* contextual relation, i.e. the dynamic/foregrounded/figure, emerges from the *Yin* contextual, the static/background/field in one viewpoint; and in another, submerges into the field for new combinations of the figure to emerge again.<sup>449</sup> This brings a paradox in the relation between the dynamic figure and the static field. On the one

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<sup>447</sup> In the investigation of how memory processes the image in it, it is found that memory displays "not only a tendency to 'nomalization,' that is, an increasing resemblance to familiar objects but also and more strikingly a deviation from the stimuli in two opposite directions" (Arnheim, *Two Faces* 822-23). The asymmetrical shapes may either be leveled or sharpened. Although the psychologists may try to attribute it to physics or physiological reason, the focus of the thesis is the conceptual framework work the phenomenon presents. See Arnheim *Two Faces*.

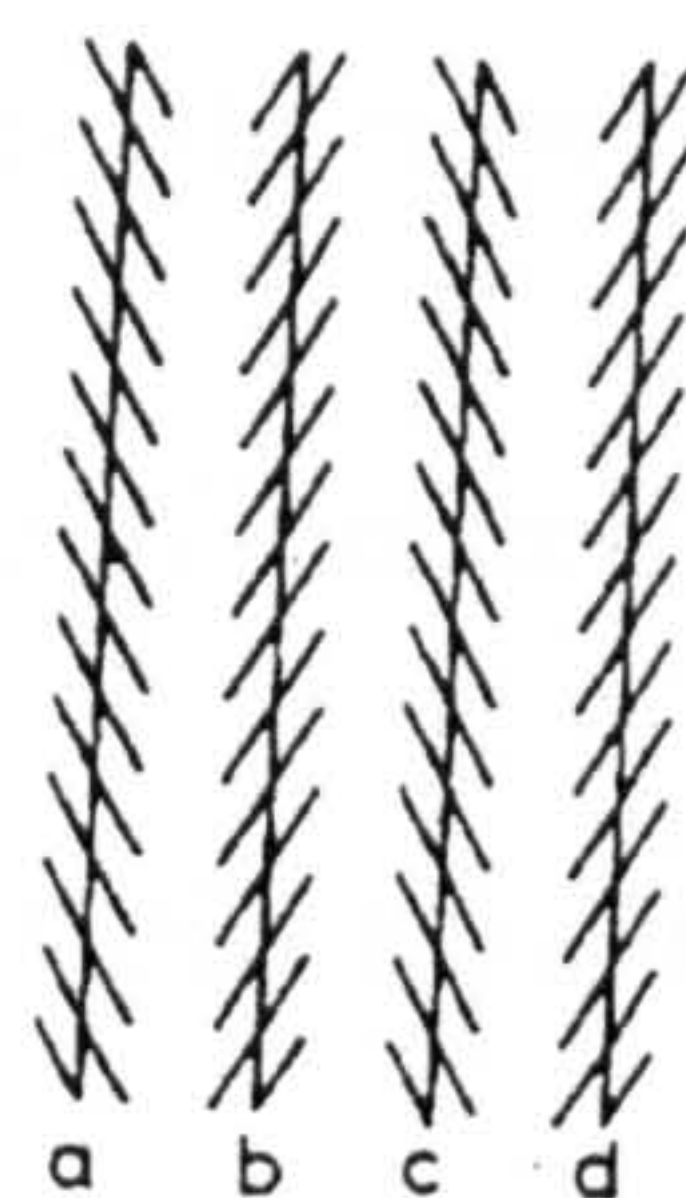
<sup>448</sup> I.e. 太極.

<sup>449</sup> One of the illustrative examples is how one poem is translated differently by different translators in a certain period of time and in different tries in different times by the same translator.

hand, the dynamic figure may be the one that seems to catch the viewer's attention actively while the static field stays passively in background, such as the fixed prosody of a genre, are prone to be viewed as parts of a field. On the other hand, a figure may be "foregrounded" for other constituents work actively as a background. For example, poets may either use the expectedness of this structure as an active background to reinforce his poetic purpose or let it remain passively stable until an unexpected deviation disrupts it. In other words, both dynamic and static contextual relations can be either active or passive in its own way and they switch their statuses as the poet design and/or when readers try a new reading, as later discussion will show. Whenever the reading shifts and, as Mitias states, "the various elements of the experience cohere and play their significant roles" (*What Makes* 85), different contextual relations may be foregrounded and different poestalts emerge from the amalgamation of them. The composition reaches another dynamic equilibrium under that reading.

In the Zöllner Illusion here, there are four parallel lines (a, b, c and d) but, intersected by numerous short slanted lines, lines a and c seems to tilt a little to the right and lines b and d to the left.





Zöllner Illusion

(Harré, 653)

This gestalt demonstrates why a rhyme scheme can bring a curious flavour of poeticalness into the reading even when it is obvious that the words rhymed carry no other aesthetic significance but for keeping the rhyming. For example, in a densely rhymed genre, like ballads or *yuan qu*<sup>450</sup> (Yuan songs) where every line needs to be rhymed, rhyming for rhyme's sake turns the originally dynamic contextual relation into a static background since it is regular and expected.

The same can be argued about metric patterns. The rhythm is a poestalt originated in dynamic contextual relations since it happens only in the process of reading, as shown earlier. However, with the iambic pentameter, one of the mainstream metric patterns in English poetry tradition, this rhythm from it somehow becomes a static element. Yeats offers an annotation of the aesthetic effect which this paradoxical alternation of the dynamic and the static sides may generate, "The purpose of rhythm, it has always seemed to me, is to

<sup>450</sup> I.e. 元曲. The poems of this genre are often rhymed on every line.



prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake, which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us with an alluring monotony [when it becomes static], while it holds us waking by variety [when it reassume its dynamism], to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols” (Yeats, *Ideas* 247) (the annotations in square brackets are the thesis’s).

Dynamic contextual relations, when recurring so often as to become regular, may turn into a static background such as when rhyming becomes a rhyme scheme or a metre becomes a metric convention. On the other hand, the static contextual relations may become dynamic when exception happens, as the sayings points out vividly, “rules are meant to be broken.”

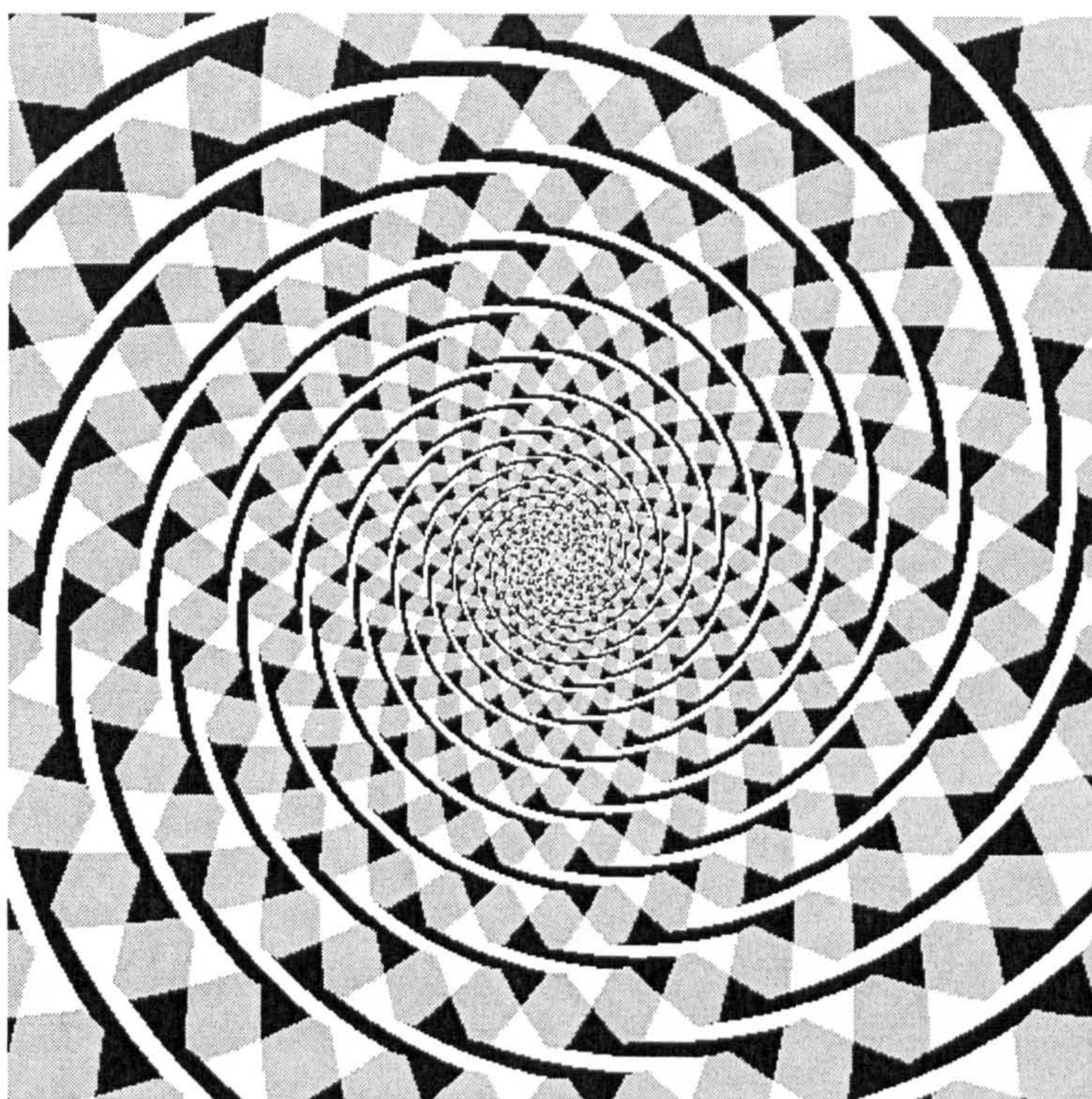
## A Contextual Relation AND a Poestalt

Even the status of being a poestalt and contextual relation is not constant. The Fraser Spiral,<sup>451</sup> produced below, offers a simple demonstration.

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<sup>451</sup> See Appendix 5 for another version.

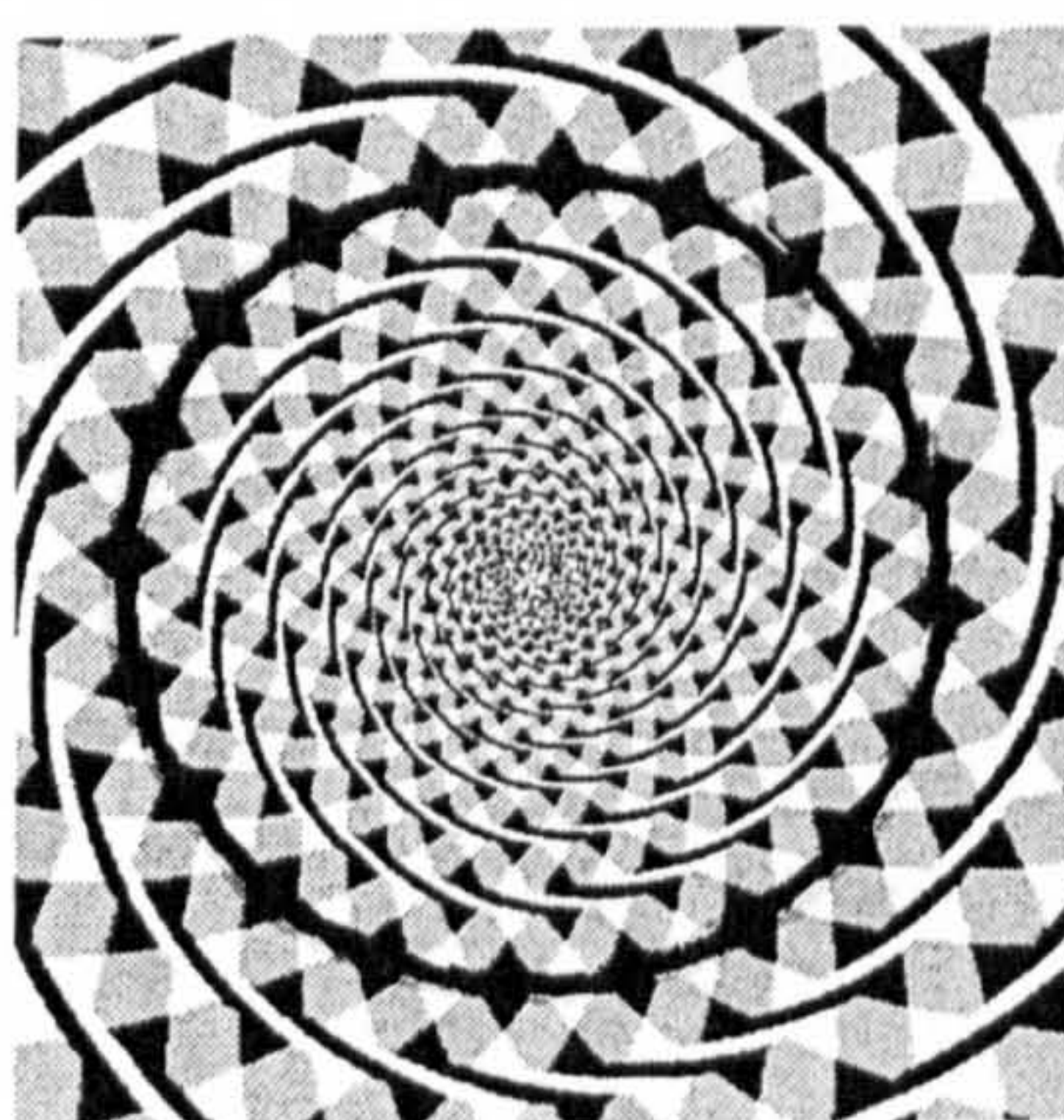




The Fraser Spiral

("Fraser Spiral Illusion")

In this diagram, viewers think that they see a spiral, formed by many curves swirling toward the centre. However, if one traces any one of these cruves on the page with a pen, as demonstrated below,





he/she will find that the pen goes in a full circle to where it starts, instead of going inwards to the centre. That is to say, the spiral does not exist but, actually, is a set of concentric circular rings as illustrated below:<sup>452</sup>



However, as the rings are isolated from the diagram, another surprise emerges: they are not exactly rings either but gestalts of ring emerging from short slightly curved sections of lines arranged in the way presented above. Therefore the gestalt of Fraser Spiral is made up of another gestalt, the “rings,” merging with the anemone-like main body reproduced below:




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<sup>452</sup> The following two diagrams are produced by the thesis.



It is arguable that even the main body presents a gestalt too. The width of the stripes diminishes into a point at the centre gives the illusion of depth or distance from where the viewer stands. As contrasted to the rings, it becomes a party in a contextual relation that generates the gestalt of the whole diagram. The Fraser Spiral, that is to say, is a gestalt made up of another diagram that generates a gestalt and a non-gestalt pattern.<sup>453</sup>

In corollary, the status of being contextual relations or poestalts need not be constant because contextual relations are fluid themselves in nature. A part of a poem, such as a couplet, may be so aesthetically effective, i.e. forming its own distinct poestalt, that it can be read independently for its beauty, i.e. its own poestalt—as the ring gestalt in Fraser Spiral. It may become an element of the poestalt of the whole poem—the spiral in Fraser Spiral. The poestalt of a poem is the holistic amalgamation of both the contextual relations and the poestalts emerge from them—in other words, a poestalt consisting of poestalts.

## Everything or the Thing

The following two case studies demonstrate two opposite ways to deal with the sophisticated and fluid relationship between the contextual relations potential in

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<sup>453</sup> One can argue that even the background presents a gestalt too. The width of the stripes diminishes into a point at the centre gives the illusion of depth or distance from where the viewer stands.

the SP and the TP and the poestalts within and beyond their texts. In the one on Huang Kesun's<sup>454</sup> translation of FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, it is demonstrated a bottom-up approach in recreating a compatible poestalt. Compatible contextual relations between those in the SP and those in the TP are compared to see how a compatible poestalt emerge in the TP. In the one on Pound's "A Fan Piece for her Imperial Lord," it is demonstrated, in contrast, a top-down approach, where only few translational maneuvers are taken only to create a GAP that is potential of a poestalt compatible to that of the SP.

### A Poestalt from a Poestalt from a Poestalt ...

One of the major adjustments that Edward FitzGerald makes to bring Omar Khayyam closer to English readers is that FitzGerald organized his *rubaiyat* into groups, as is the norm of English poetry sequence,<sup>455</sup> either with explicit devices such as grammatical connection or of similar imagery and theme.<sup>456</sup> Despite the rearrangement and screening through editions,<sup>457</sup> a group of four quatrains emerges

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<sup>454</sup> I.e. 黃克孫.

<sup>455</sup> For example, Shakespeare's sonnets contain several major sections, each of which can be divided into more smaller groups.

<sup>456</sup> All of the *rubaiyat* that can be more assuredly attributed to Omar Khayyam are independent poems in themselves and, when compiled into collection, arranged alphabetically as in Persian literary tradition. However, the relationship between them and FitzGerald's translation is irrelevant here and FitzGerald is treated as original text, since Huang produces his translation solely out of FitzGerald.

<sup>457</sup> The organization of FitzGerald's sequence evolved through three stages: seventy-five quatrains in the first edition, one hundred and ten in the second and one hundred and one in both the third and the fourth. Between the first and the second stages, i.e. the first and the second editions, there are considerable rearrangements in sequence; between the second and the third stages, i.e. the second

as a tightly organized unit in three later editions, i.e. *rubaiyat* seventy-three to seventy-six in second edition or *rubaiyat* sixty-eight to seventy-one in the last two editions. Though the whole sequence may generate a poestalt as the spiral in the Fraser Spiral, this group itself contains a contextual relations system that generates its own poestalt, like the ring,<sup>458</sup> before it merges into the sequence, and can be admired for its own sake. Shown below is the group in the fourth edition:

68

We are no other than a moving row  
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go  
Round with the Sun-illuminated Lantern held  
In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

69

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays  
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days;  
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,  
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

70

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,  
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;  
And He that toss'ed you down into the Field,  
*He* knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows!

71

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,

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and the last two editions, nine poems were left out with the order of corresponding quatrains in these two stages remaining relatively the same. See "Comparative Table of Stanzas of Four Editions" (FitzGerald 243-45).

<sup>458</sup> In corollary, each poem in this group may also generate its own poestalt, before it merges into the group, and can be admired for its own sake.



Moves on: not all your Piety nor Wit  
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
 Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

(FitzGerald 209-10)

Among other metaphors and motives generic in FitzGerald, a contextual relation of the motif of movement stands out and strings these four *rubaiyat* as a poetic body. The passively moving row of shadow figures on a lamp shade transforms into rows of chess pieces that can move only passively, which are usually carved into symbolically verisimilitudinous figures of diversified human classes as the shadow figures. The chess pieces that are heading involuntarily to their death turn out as a flying ball mobilized by the slaying movement of scythe-like polo mallets. The long swinging polo mallets assume the form of moving fingers, also rod-shaped, that write and create the ever progressing text, supposedly in black ink, echoing the passive moving rows of shadow figures. In a word, the motif of movement proves the key that bestows the metamorphosis of images in this group a basis of aesthetic coherence, without which metaphors of shadow show, chess game, polo and writing fingers may seem only loosely related, if related at all.

Robert Graves's criticism of the metaphorical shift in this group highlights the importance of seeing this contextual relation. He comments, "[W]hy FitzGerald has suppressed Omar's polo metaphor is hard to answer: [...] his line: 'And He that

toss'd thee down into the Field' drags, because of an unnecessary 'into' which does not occur in the original" (Graves 13). Graves probably fails to see why, despite the substantial rearrangement through editions, these two *rubaiyat* are linked together from the first edition to the last. One may argue that the polo metaphor is not "suppressed" but merged with chess metaphor into a chess-polo montage and, as a result, the metaphorical co-existence leads Graves to feel that the latter is "suppressed." But, viewed with the contextual relation with the key motif, the seeming collision of the two metaphors in FitzGerald turns into an effective GAP.

As this reiterated motif forms a contextual relation across these *rubaiyat*, i.e. the SP in question, and is crucial to the poestalt of the SP, it becomes relevant in a critical comparison between this SP and Huang's translation, i.e. its TP, to investigate how the counterpart in the TP works and whether it is aesthetically compatible to that of the SP. It is like the importance of checking how the spiral effect is emerging from the whole diagram instead of just whether each line and spot are reproduced when one reproduces the phenomenon of a Fraser Spiral.

Huang Kesun translates FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* into a series of *qiyan jueju*<sup>459</sup> (seven-character quatrain), or *qijue*, an established Chinese poetic genre. Huang's strategy provides a showhouse of this issue: An attempt to reconstruct

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<sup>459</sup> I.e. 七言絕句.

a comprehensive contextual relation system that may generate a poestalt compatible to that of FitzGerald. Displayed below is Huang's translation, followed by its back-translation:

68

*liu li bing zhao/ zhuan ling long*

(crystalline glass lampshade/a rotating exquisiteness)

*qiao lou shan he/ da jiang gong*

(skillfully carved/mountains and rivers/a masterpiece)

*zhong you/ guang ming deng/ yi zhan*

(inside/ illuminant light/ a lamp)

*zhi ren/ ni ma/ ying chuang chuang*(paper human figures/ porcelain horse figures/ rows of shadow)<sup>460</sup>

69

*zong heng/ ri ye/ wei qi ju,*

(arranged horizontally and vertically/Day, Night/become a chess game)

*ping shang/ chun qiu/ jie zheng nong.*

(on the board/spring autumn/fate prevails on high tide)

*zhuan huan/ teng nuo/ you wei liao,*

(to turn and switch/ to reallocate / no sign of ending)

*can qi/ yi yi/ ru hu zhong.*(remaining pieces/ one by one/ into piece pots)<sup>461</sup>

70

*yan kan/ qian kun/ yi ju qi,*

(it seems/Qian, Qun/a chess game)

*man ping/ hei bai zi/ li li.*


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<sup>460</sup> The original text is: 琉璃冰罩轉玲瓏/巧鏤山河大匠功/中有光明燈一盞/紙人/泥馬/影憧憧

<sup>461</sup> The original text is:

縱橫日夜爲棋局  
 枰上春秋劫正濃  
 轉換騰挪猶未了  
 殘棋一一入壺中



(everywhere on board/black and white pieces/interlocking arrays)

keng ran/ yi zi/ cheng he jie,

(Alas!/another piece laid /what consequence will follow?)

wei you/ cang cang/ miao shou/ zhi.

(Only/divine, heavenly/ magical hand/ to know)<sup>462</sup>

71

ming ming/ you shou/ xie tian shu

(from divine source/ there is/are *hand/s*/writing celestial record)

cai bi/ wu qing/ hui bu yi

(heavenly brush/relentlessly/never ceasing strokes)

liu jing/ ren jian/ lei ji qian

(shedding/humanity/thousands of streams of tears)

bu neng/ xi qu/ ban hang zi

(not able to/wash away/half a line)<sup>463</sup>

(Huang Kesun 69-72)

The critiques of Hunag's translation include conflicting opinions ranging from opulent praise such as a consanguinity of "*shen*"<sup>464</sup> (literally, "essence") that transcends "*mao*"<sup>465</sup> (literary, "physical features or form") to serious disparagement

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<sup>462</sup> The original text is:

眼看乾坤一局棋  
滿坪黑白子離離  
鏗然一子成何劫  
惟有蒼蒼妙手知

<sup>463</sup> The original text is:

冥冥有手寫天書  
彩筆無情揮不已  
流盡人間淚幾千  
不能洗去半行字

<sup>464</sup> I.e. 神.

<sup>465</sup> I.e. 貌. See Sung 243-44. However, while she marvels at Huang's achievement for his discarding the "body," Sung Mei-hua 宋美樺 seems to ignore or neglect the whole body of Huang's *Rubai Ji* and that of FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* are both in quatrain of rhyme scheme aaba—Huang definitely did not try to discard the "body." It seems to imply a translation ideology often assumed by binary translation criticism that either you take all or leave all, which unfortunately, is hardly ever the case

such as "There is little FitzGerald and perforce less Omar."<sup>466</sup> However, both are right on their own precepts and wrong because it cannot be denied that the sheer prosodic similarity between *rubai* and *qijue* disproves both extremes of criticism on the issue whether Huang translates freely or not. Huang's translation, after all, does conform with FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* from the first *rubai* to the last on the level of genre, a fact so obvious as to be taken for granted. Huang like every poetry translator has, so to speak, chosen his fetter to dance with on the rope of poetry translation.<sup>467</sup>

The inevitable shifts, either linguistic or cultural, Huang has adopted may appear either ranging from a beautiful defiance to a slavish reproduction of the original to a favorable eye or simply a scandalizing indulgence of translator's liberty to an unfavorable eye. As a translation cannot but be different in one way or another from the original, there is no end in this kind of tug-of-war between such binaries (what we have here is form and essence) and no point in getting into one either. A relevant approach would be to investigate firstly what contextual relations are potential in the SP and the TP, secondly how they are functioning, as the spiral, the ring or the anemone-like background, and thirdly, how the contextual relations of the TP generates compatible poestalts to that of the SP.

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in any type of translation.

<sup>466</sup> See Peng in Ouyang 310. This notion of Peng Ching-hsi illegitimately assumes that any translator of FitzGerald should be in the end translating also Omar Khayyam.

<sup>467</sup> Dyrden created this inspiring and vivid comparison of poetry translation to "dancing on ropes with fettered legs" in his criticism on Ben Jonson's translation of *Ars Poetica* by Horace (Sisson 10-11).

The forms adopted for both the SP and the TP becomes a basic static contextual relation for other contextual relations to build upon, just like the anemone-like background in Fraser Spiral. *Rubai* was an ancient genre of poetry prevalent in twelfth century Persia; and, *qiyan jueju*,<sup>468</sup> or *qijue*, originated in seventh century Tang dynasty and have been one of the major poetic forms for centuries.<sup>469</sup> Both are quatrains with rhyme scheme *aaba* that, short as they are, stand as complete poems on its own. FitzGerald's translation of this ancient Persian genre, keeping the quatrain and rhyme scheme, also shares this similarity to *qijue*. This similarity in form and style between *qijue* and FitzGerald's *rubaiyat* is a rare literary coincidence between two traditions that have hardly ever been connected. It offers a ready MAP and renders a rare chance to see how cultural memory in form can be introduced as modulating mechanism for aesthetic coherence in the GAP's in the TP.

With Huang's mediating the literary resource "remembered" in *jueju* and its literary tradition, the alien experience of FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* finds in the Chinese language and culture a more benign environment to germinate in. Just as "any single English sonnet evokes all the sonnets of Shakespeare and Petrarch, as well as the

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<sup>468</sup> I.e. 七言絕句.

<sup>469</sup> See Huazheng Shuju 418-538, 687-742, 831-847, 914-977; Tan 177-211.



entire tradition of sonnet writing” (Tymoczko 16) due to the metonymic vitality in genre, the poetic energy carried within *qijue* helps FitzGerald to leap across the cultural gap between the two worlds to meet Chinese readers.

The aesthetic unison of the iambic pentametric rhythm “infrastructuralizes” the phonetic contextual relation throughout FitzGerald’s *Rubaiyat*. This foundational tempo element proves extremely difficult for vernacular Chinese, a tonal ideographic language, to duplicate. The regular marching feet that bestow an effortless rhythm in *Rubaiyat* would stumble with the awkward pauses in vernacular Chinese which could not keep a pace as regular as to be natural.

It is a different story with the classic Chinese poetry. The typical pause plan seven character verse, 4-3 or 2-2-3,<sup>470</sup> forms an underpinning rhythmic stability parallel to the iambic pentameter permeating in FitzGerald’s *Rubaiyat*. The stylistic features of *rubaiyat*— a combination of epigrammatic brevity, descriptiveness and reflectivity and usually a moral at the end<sup>471</sup> --finds similarities in major subsidiaries of *qijue*, especially that of Song dynasty.<sup>472</sup> While *wujue* in only twenty characters extracts and crystallizes the essence of poetics in snapshot compactness, *qijue* in twenty eight characters, gaining a quicksilver flexibility from the eight more

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<sup>470</sup> Upon this norm, sometimes poets adopt other pause plan for a foregrounding aberration, as *hong qiang wui dui bi ying wu* 碧鸚鵡對紅薔薇 in “*Ri She*” 日射 by Li Shangying 李商隱 [812-858]. Its pause plan is as follows: *bi ying wu* (a green parrot)-*dui* (facing)-*hong qiang wui* (red roses), i.e. 3-1-3.

<sup>471</sup> See Avery 7-31; “Ruba’i.”; “Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, The.”

<sup>472</sup> See Huazheng Shuju 687-742; Jin intro.

characters, develops a philosophical epigrammatic style. A conclusive climax usually waits at the latter half of the *qijue* in contrast to lyrical description or reflection in the first half. This feature of *qijue*, fully applied by poets of Song some of whom use it more to express philosophical observation than lyrical emotional cataclysm as poets of Tang do, becomes part of its ideological infrastructure and is “remembered” in a reader as an admiring and interpreting basis. An often remembered and quoted *qijue*’s is “*Ti Xilin Bi*”<sup>473</sup> (Writing a poem on the wall at Xilin), an philosophical observation from viewing the Mountain Lu, by Su Shi,<sup>474</sup> arguably the greatest poet of Song, who masterfully applies the unique strength of this genre.<sup>475</sup> Following the first two lines describing the topology of this mountain famous for its scenic complexity, he concludes with an over determined observation, “The reason why one fails to see the true face of Lu/ Originates in the absence of panoramic view,” which can be poetic or philosophical or even, moralistic. Another good example of this feature is “*Huosui Ting Ji Guang Shu Yougan*”<sup>476</sup> (literally, an observation learned

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<sup>473</sup> I.e. 題西林壁.

<sup>474</sup> I.e. 蘇軾.

<sup>475</sup> The following chart displays side by side the original text of the poem, its transliteration and literal translation. (Jin 151)

transliteration	literal translation
橫看成嶺側成峰 Heng kan chen ling/cecheng feng	Sierra viewed from one angel/ becomes a mount for another
遠近高低盡不同 Yuan/jin/gao/di/jin bu tong	Far/ near/ high/ low/ no two scenes are similar
不識廬山真面目 Bu shi /lu shan/zhen bian mu	Being unable to see/ Mountain Lu/ true appearance
只緣身在此山中 Zhi yuan/shen zai ci shan zhong	Only because/one is situated in the mountain

<sup>476</sup> I.e. 活水亭記觀書有感.



when reading at Flowing Spring Pavilion) of Ju Xi<sup>477</sup> (1103-1200, the Southern Song Dynasty), one of the founders of Neo-Confucianism, a philosopher and poet.<sup>478</sup> Compared with Su's "*Ti Xilin Bi*," the philosophical intention in Ju's poem works more subtly with the argument absorbed in the lyrical metaphor. As a result, the interpretation of the spring in Ju's metaphor stays poetically ambiguous, even when Ju, as a Confucian, may have certain moral lesson in mind.

As shown by the italicization in literal translation, most of the images and metaphors are transferred, including the shadow show, the lamp, the chess game, the writing fingers, the texts—with one exception, the polo, which is replaced in the TP with *weiqi*<sup>479</sup> (chess of besieging). Huang constructs an AAP, a substitute metaphorical design centred with the imagery of *weiqi*, to form an contextual relation aesthetically compatible to that of the SP. In addition, the allusiveness of the classic

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<sup>477</sup> I.e. 朱熹.

<sup>478</sup> The following chart displays side by side the original text of the poem, its transliteration and literal translation. (Jin 312)

(the SP)	(transliteration)	(literal translation)
半畝方塘一鑒開	Ban mu fang tang /yi jian kai	(The pond, half an acre large/ opens up a mirror.)
天光雲影共徘徊	Tian guang yun ying/ gong pai hwai	(Shiny light and passing cloud/ enjoying each other's company.)
問渠那得清如許	Wen qu/ na de/ qing ru sui	(Lovely spring, pray tell me/ how do you stay crystalline and clear?)
爲有源頭活水來	Wei you/ yuan tou huo sui lai	(It is because there is/ an ever-running source of fresh water.)

<sup>479</sup> I.e. 圍棋. A form of Chinese chess, though legend has it that Sage Emperor Yao 堯 invented it, has existed as early as Chou dynasty (eleven centuries B. C.). ("*weiqi*"). The character *wei* mean "to besiege."



poetic genres, including *qijue*, also provides a hospitable environment for allusions carrying rich cultural memory to create beautiful chemistry. With the two, the contextual relation among the trio, *zhongheng-cunqiu-jie*,<sup>480</sup> under this AAP produces an effective GAP that generates poestalt aesthetically compatible to that of the SP.

*Zongheng* (vertical, horizontal) in line 1 of *rubai* 69, originated at least as early as the latter half of East Zhou Dynasty (475-221 B.C.), i.e. the Warlords Period. At the time, the policy of allying the weaker six dukedoms to resist the invasion of the strongest, Chin, was termed as *hezong*<sup>481</sup> (vertical alliance) and Chin's counter strategy of keeping the other six dukedoms from forming alliance was termed as *lianheng*<sup>482</sup> (horizontal liaison). *Zhonghengjia*<sup>483</sup> (the school of *zhongheng*) later became the brand name for resourceful, ambitious, manipulative diplomats and international political entrepreneurs and this bi-character phrase, *zhongheng*, connotes those qualities. The Player *zhongheng*'s (used as a verb) the whole setting then means more than manipulating the situation only; it also manifests the helplessness of those "playees," the pieces on the board, just as those fatuous dukes who were completely under the manipulation of able diplomats and at the mercy of

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<sup>480</sup> I.e. 縱橫-春秋-劫.

<sup>481</sup> I.e. 合縱.

<sup>482</sup> I.e. 連橫.

<sup>483</sup> I.e. 縱橫家.

the duke of Chin. The semantic ambiguity resonates with the shift in next line, *cunqiu* (spring, autumn). Even older than *zhongheng*, *cunqiu*, the bi-character term, with which Confucius titled his historic record of the unstable period directly preceding the Warlords Period and which became consequently the name of the period it covered, connotes transitivity and eventfulness. Those five centuries of turmoil and struggle presents endless chess-like conflicts between some of the most excellent minds in Chinese history. “He,” the unfathomable, mystic power from — above, is hinted here in *jie*, the predestined catastrophe to a person, a country or an age. The amalgamation of linguistic, literary and historical association, catalyzed by the metonymic memory in and the poetic structure of *qijue*, releases an aesthetic impact from the trio contextual relation, *zhongheng-cunqiu-jie*, conjuring a panorama of the world as a chess, where kings and pawns, heroes and dastards, are all but pieces in a series of games played by a “He” unknown and unwitting to them.

In “*Qiu Xing Ba Shou*,” one of his poetic pinnacles in his late years, Du Fu concluded with a metaphor of *weiqi* the dramatic transitions of the first half of Tang dynasty from an unprecedented prosperity that Chinese history has ever witnessed to a series of devastating domestic wars, “It’s said that Chang An is but a chess board./ It saddens me that the past century should have been so eventful./ Many a prince has

fallen and many risen;/ Ministers and generals simply come and go. ...”<sup>484</sup>; The metropolitan capital, Changan, with boulevards and thoroughfares crossing vertically, is compared to a chess board implying dukes and princes come and go only like pieces. This poetic peak in past literary history, though far away in time in Tang dynasty, certainly still stands as a towering landmark for later travelers in the literary realm to steer the way in which they interpret poetry.

There is another contextual relation centred around Huang’s *rubai* 70. It exemplifies how different contextual relations in the SP and the TP arrive at compatible overall aesthetic coherence. Examined together with FitzGerald’s, as shown in literal translation, the TP seems only remotely reminiscent of the SP: the syntactic structures differ greatly, the motif of polo is absent, and no “Ayes and Noes” nor “Here and There”—just to mention a few major shifts. It seems more like an interpretation or re-writing. The closest call is in the last line where both mention an omniscient controller above. However, read from the overview of the whole series, Huang’s *rubai* 70 is aesthetically coherent to its context.<sup>485</sup> with necessary MAP’s, it fits into the poetic mosaic of this group which Huang tries to recreate to generate poestalt compatible to the that of the SP.

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<sup>484</sup> The original text of the first two couplets of the fourth verse in the sequence, is shown as follows: 聞道長安似奕棋百年世事不勝悲王侯第宅皆新主文武衣冠異昔時…… (Du Fu 369).

<sup>485</sup> All the while, the formal resemblance of *qijue* to *rubai* sets a similar poetic framework for other contextual relations to evolve upon. The substitution of motif, ostensibly drastic when viewed in isolation, becomes a strategic move on this basis.



The fact that the pieces in western chess literally move around on the chessboard allows this metaphor to merge and crescendo into the metaphor of polo, where the ball (the “piece” in this game) on the field (“chessboard”) moves around more violently. And the expression of chess in 69, “slay,” is visualized vividly in the action basic in polo: the swing of mallet that resembles the swing of Death’s scythe that slays and takes human lives, pieces in this chess game of World.

The pieces of its Chinese counterpart, *weiqi* or *qi*, however, do not share this mobility. In *weiqi*, the pieces stay where they are laid down unless taken out, i.e. “slain,” for being suffocatively surrounded by opponent’s pieces with no space left around for their side to develop their array.<sup>486</sup> In fact, this is why it is named *wei*, literally “to surround.” The opposing sides, one playing with white pieces and the other with black pieces, lay down one piece at a time alternately, forming dot lines and areas that expand and spread to struggle and surround the opponent’s. The forms made up by the static pieces may grow and therefore “move” strategically as if two armies in battle. This difference between the two kinds of chess becomes a critical variant in deciding whether the translation should follow the metaphorical shift

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<sup>486</sup> The chessboard of *weiqi* is a square white board with nineteen vertical lines and nineteen horizontal lines forming 361 crossing spots on which the piece is laid. Each crossing spot has two to four adjacent spots. When all of them are occupied by opponent’s pieces, the surrounded piece is “slain” and taken out. When all adjacent spots of a group of pieces are occupied by the opponent’s, the whole group is “slain” and taken out. Sometimes, the crossing spots return vacant in this way may be re-occupied by either sides; and sometimes, the crossing spots are left vacant in such a manner that one can not fill the vacancy without being surrounded immediately—i.e. “slain” right on the spot. In the latter case, the vacant spot or spots are points won by the side that surrounded it or them. When there is no more vacant spot where one can lay a piece without been “slain,” the game is over. The side that gains the more of such vacant spots wins.

literally or keep the continuity of motif. While the original can slide smoothly from metaphor of the western chess to that of the sport of polo by their similarity, fusing the two into one aesthetic holism, its Chinese translation will suffer an aesthetic incoherence between *weiqi* metaphor and polo metaphor if following it literally and fail to form a parallel aesthetic coherence. It is necessary to view the metaphor of the SP with different AAP and adopt relevant MAP's so that the poestalt thus emerging can be aesthetically compatible to the movement motif in the SP.

As the chessboard expands into a polo field that spreads out much wider, where opposing teams compete each other in ever changing arrays, the chess piece transforms into a polo ball that moves in a much grander scale. On the other hand, the stage where the pieces of *weiqi* enjoy their brief turns also expands accordingly. The chessboard of *weiqi* composed of Day and Night in Huang's *rubai* 69 now expands to include *Qian Kun*,<sup>487</sup> i.e. the totality of the universe. In this gigantic chessboard, the two armies of black and white are dispatched into strategic arrays (*li li*, literally "in arrays") all over the board (*man ping*) like the competing teams in polo. With each piece laid down on the field, a new situation is created and fate has shifted to a catastrophe yet to be known (*kengran yizi cheng hejie*, literally "What *jie* shall one piece bring to the situation?")—a series of freeze frames of every critical

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<sup>487</sup> The former of which is the abstract concept for Heaven and the latter that for Earth.



moment in the game. How will all the world change because of one move?! It is not for each individual piece to know. A moment of brimming static energy: a typical presentation of dramatic tension of *qijue*.

## A Poestalt for a Poestalt

Like Huang Kesun, Pound adopts an genre as the basis for his contextual relation to develop a poestalt aesthetically compatible to that of the SP. The choice of Pound serves this purpose in a different manner and of different significance. The poetalt of Ban Jieyu's<sup>488</sup> "*Yuan Ge Xing*" (A Song of Sadness), the SP in question here, shows a clear focus, a deserted royal concubine lamenting her desolation indirectly and subtly through talking about the fan (probably to herself) that she makes for the emperor. The poem earns the praise from Zhong Rong, "succinct expression and clear image with deep grief expressed in beautiful rhetoric,"<sup>489</sup> and was classified by Zhong in the highest of three ranks of five-character poetry up to

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<sup>488</sup> 班婕妤 (48-2 BC). She was a royal concubine of the Emperor Cheng of the West Han dynasty (on throne from 33 to 7 BC), famous for her literary talent. Her poetry was placed at the top rank by Zhong Rong in his *Shi Pin*, who classified five-character poetry before his time into three ranks according the literary achievement of the poets. See *Shi Pin*. However, there has been doubt about the authenticity of the authorship of the poem. Liu Xie, contemporary to Zhong, points out that it seems too early for such mature five-character poem to appear since there was few five-character poems in the imperial anthology of contemporary poetry sponsored by the Emperor Cheng, which was meant to include poetry of the time (Liu Xie, 66). Yan Yu 嚴羽 expresses his doubt by keeping it an open end issue, stating that the poem is laid under Yan Yannian 顏延年(384-456) in *Yue Fu* 樂府 (ballads) (Yan Yu 454) though in *Wen Xuan* by Xiao Tong the authorship of Ban is taken for granted. Since it is included in *Wen Xuan*, compiled in the sixth century, it cannot be later than this. Whatever the truth is, as this issue does not affect its status as a much admired poem and the SP to these modern translations, it will not be discussed in this thesis.

<sup>489</sup> I.e. 詞旨清捷怨深文綺 (Zhong in He 10).



his time of different artistic achievement. The secret of the poestalt is that, the thesis argues,<sup>490</sup> it is achieved through a double image of the fan and the fan maker, like a fan itself—with the description of the fan on the Yang side—the apparent one—while the fan make on the Yin side—the implied side. The two are closely connected but, no matter how the poet shows this “fan” to readers, she means to keeps the Yin side only subtly and gently reminded.<sup>491</sup>

The following are the SP<sup>492</sup> (with gloss and the literal translation of each line provided) and the translations:

The transliteration of the SP and the gloss

The literal translation of each line

<i>xin</i>	<i>lie</i>	<i>qi</i>	<i>wan</i>	<i>su</i>
newly	cut	The	silk	white
		Provence		

The silk from the provence Qi  
newly cut

<sup>490</sup> As there is creative involvement of the viewer in any reading, this poestalt is of this reading by the thesis.

<sup>491</sup> This interpretation by the thesis conforms with the Yin-Yang relationship between a man and his concubine, with the former as Yang and the latter as Yin, adding another façade to the static contextual relations in Pound's TP.

<sup>492</sup> I.e. 怨歌行. Below is its text:

新裂齊紈素	
皎潔如霜雪	2
裁爲合歡扇	
團團似明月	4
出入君懷袖	
動搖微風發	6
常恐秋節至	
涼風奪炎熱	8
棄捐篋笥中	
恩情中道絕	10

		of Qi				
<i>jiao</i>	<i>jie</i>	<i>ru</i>	<i>shuang</i>	<i>shue</i>	2	Bright and white like frost and snow
bright	clean	as	frost	snow		
<i>cai</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>huan</i>	<i>shan</i>		Tailored into a fan named "Happy Union"
to tailor	into	to unite	joy	a fan		
<i>tuan</i>	<i>tuan</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>ming</i>	<i>yue</i>	4	Round as the bright moon
round	round	as	bright	moon		
<i>chu</i>	<i>ru</i>	<i>jun</i>	<i>huai</i>	<i>xiu</i>		Taken out of and put into the arms of my Lord
to emerge	to enter	my Lord	arms	sleeves		
<i>dong</i>	<i>yao</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>feng</i>	<i>fa</i>	6	When Waved, producing breezes
to shake	to swing	little/weak	wind	to happen		
<i>chang</i>	<i>kong</i>	<i>qiu</i>	<i>jie</i>	<i>zhi</i>		Constant fear of the arrival of autumn
often	to fear	autumn	time	to arrive		
<i>liang</i>	<i>feng</i>	<i>duo</i>	<i>re</i>	<i>yan</i>	8	When the hot whether is taken away
cool	wind	to deprive	hot	scorching		
<i>qi</i>	<i>juan</i>	<i>qie</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>zhong</i>		Put away into a chest
to desert	to	a trunk	a chest	inside		
	abandon					
<i>eng</i>	<i>qing</i>	<i>zhong</i>	<i>dao</i>	<i>jue</i>	10	Love ends abruptly there and then
favoritism	emotion	middle	way	to end		

"Fan-Piece, for her Imperial Lord."

O, Fan of the white silk,

Clear as frost on the grass-blade,

You also are laid aside.

(Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems* 108)

### "A Song of Grief"

Glazed silk, newly cut, smooth, glittering, white,

As white, as clear, even as frost and snow.

Perfectly fashioned into a fan,

Round, round, like the brilliant moon,	4
Treasured in my Lord's sleeve, taken out, put in—	
Wave, shake it, and a little wind flies from it.	6
How often I fear the Autumn Season's coming	
And the fierce, cold wind which scatters the blazing heat.	8
Discarded, passed by, laid in a box alone;	
Such a little time, and the thing of love cast off.	10
	(Lowell 142)

“A Song of Grief”

I took a piece of the fine cloth of Ch'i,	
White silk glowing and pure like frosted snow,	2
And made you a doubled fan of union and joy,	
As flawlessly round as the bright moon.	4
It comes and goes in my Lord's sleeves.	
You can wave it and start a cooling breeze.	6
But I am always afraid that when Autumn comes,	
And the cold blasts drive away the heat,	8
You will store it away in a bamboo case,	
And your love of it will stop midway.	10
	(Rexroth, <i>Women Poets</i> 3)

The five couplets of the SP can be divided into three parts. The first, couplets 1 and 2, provides a description of the topic object: the fan. It is of superb quality as the source of the silk, the province Qi, and the simile of snow and frost show—a hint of the virtue of the poet. The wish of the poet for the Emperor's favoritism is also implied here in the second couplet with the name, *he huan*, and shape of the fan, round as the moon. The second part, couplet 3, implies the favoritism from the Emperor the fan is enjoying. It is a happy and proud moment—a sharp contrast to what happens when



the season changes. *Chu ru* in line 5 intertextualizes with the idiom *chuijiang ruxian*<sup>493</sup> (sent away from the court as the commander in chief, returning to the court to be appointed the prime minister), originally exemplifying one of the greatest successes one can achieve in the court.<sup>494</sup> This allusion is immediately both supporting and supported by the wind image in the next line. *Feng* followed by the action *fa* may intertextualize with the idiom *yiqi fengfa*<sup>495</sup> (one's pride blowing like strong wind). This justifies why *wei*, rather pejorative literally, meaning "little, weak," is adopted. After all, it is the pride of an daily object that wins the Emperor's favoritism for the moment, far much smaller in scale than that of a successful politician or general. In the third part, the atmosphere shifts. The fan expresses its constant worry that when the autumn arrives it will be discarded. The season, a regular return by year, points out the unavoidability of the tragedy. It also hints the recklessness with which her devotion is handled and therefore the lowliness of her status. At the last line, "*eng qing*" is adopted to describe the feelings the fan user hold towards the fan. Since this emotion and attachment is specifically between two persons, only here does the poet explicitly identify herself to the fan.

It is obvious that Pound has left substantial part of the contents of the ST out

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<sup>493</sup> I.e. 出將入相.

<sup>494</sup> An allusion to the story of Wu Qi 吳起 (440-381 BC) of the Warlords Period (ca 403-221 BC) of the late Zhou dynasty, a famous political and military figure. See Sima 2208-12.

<sup>495</sup> I.e. 意氣風發.

of his translation. The brief history of the origin of the object is left out. It might be argued that Pound's translation can become too generic to be related to the SP. The image of moon is left out. It seems that the irony in the fan from its name, which implies union, is costly replaced. The season autumn is not mentioned. It seems that there is no indicator of an imminent desertion. In a word, it seems that with less material left there seem to be less possibilities left for forming contextual relation, as what happens to a kaleidoscope which loses substantial amount of the colourful chips in it. The secret of Pound is both choosing the more significant DOS's from the SP and creating brand new highly creative DOS's and arranging them with a clear and effective AAP for readers. Therefore, there may seem to be a gap caused by what is left in the SP, but it turns out to be an effective GAP.

Pound tops the TP with a descriptive title, adopts a set of description of the object in question and its material from the SP, and adds a comparison which is partly alien to the SP ("grass-blade) and partly imported from the SP ("clear as frost). The first two DOS's hint at the storyline in the SP ("for her imperial Lord") and keeps a significant quality of the object ("white silk"). The last DOS contains an ostensibly alien element, "grass-blade," which is in fact a replacement forms several crucial GAP's with other DOS in the TP and recreates the imagery system compatible to the SP. Fristly, it hints the temporal background, the season "autumn,"

since it is when frost forms on the ground, and therefore, on grass. Secondly, forming phonic contextual relation between “blade” and both “lord” and “laid,” it hints the fact that her desertion is purely His Majesty’s doing. Thirdly, the lowliness of a grass blade hints that of the poet’s status, which is further affirmed with a faint slant rhyme between it and “aside.”

However, it is the word “also” that is the DOS that catalyzes the poestalt compatible to that of the SP. Without it, the TP becomes “O, Fan of the white silk, clear as frost on the grass-blade, you are laid aside,” a direct statement of a fact about an object. There is a link missing between the fan and the speaker. With this DOS, the last piece of puzzle fits in and a poestalt emerges: it implies that a parallel situation is happening to the speaker and therefore the description becomes more than an objective observation but an implication of speaker’s emotions and status. This conforms to the indirectness and subtlety in the postalt of the SP. Arguably, Pound’s translation is like an aesthetically successful one-and-a-half-hour movie version of a bulky novel such as *War and Peace*—only the most significant elements are selected and imported and arranged in an aesthetically effective way. “Fan-Piece, for her Imperial Lord” can be both poem written anew and a translation. As Ming Xie puts it, “In Pound’s *oeuvre*, it is often difficult to distinguish between what is translation or adaptation and what is original composition” (Ming Xie in Nadel, 204).



Creativity is a must in creating a poestalt, no matter whether in an original poem or in poetry translation.

It is a fact that the choice of the form is a result of the influence of haiku, a Japanese poetic genre which Pound has also been experimenting.<sup>496</sup> In addition, considering the relationship between Pound and the Imagism, it therefore can be argued that this style also results in what it is here,<sup>497</sup> as “the imagists wrote succinct verse of dry clarity and hard outline in which an exact visual image made a total poetic statement.”<sup>498</sup> While the pause plan of and the cultural memories in *qijue* provide Huang Kesun a continuing basis for his *ruabaiyat* to form a compatible sequence that parallels with FitzGerald’s from one *rubai* to the next, the norm of haiku to focus on one image and “expressing much and suggesting more in the fewest words possible”<sup>499</sup> justifies the minimalism in Pound’s choice of DOS and anticipates a different but compatible poetic aesthetics from the SP.

However, that does not explain completely why and how Pound’s translation

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<sup>496</sup> One of the most famous example is “In station of the metro.” This brings Pound’s translation to one of the fifth type of Holmes’s “fan of meta-literary forms.” Pound imitates the SP with a haiku-like imagist poem, taking material from the SP only what he thinks necessary. In fact, Pound looked into Japanese and Chinese literary traditions early in the second decade of the twentieth century searching for “new model for poetic innovation” (Xie Ming in Nadel, 208). The example Pound set up for American version of haiku became something of a model, the following description of it by Jack Kerouac can serve as a description of Pound’s “Fan-Piece, for her Imperial Lord,” “Above all, a Haiku must be very simple and free of all poetic trickery and make a little picture and yet be as airy and graceful as a Vivaldi Pastorella” (Kerouac, *American* np).

<sup>497</sup> This style and form is highly related to the importation of Japanese genre into Western literary traditions, which is not covered in the ambition of this thesis.

<sup>498</sup> See “Imagism” in *Merriam Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature*. “Haiku are epigrammatic nature poems in which the writer aims to achieve maximum effect by minimum means. ... The best haiku are similarly allusive and oblique yet piercingly clear” (Washington 7). “Fan-Piece, for her Imperial Lord” certainly fits this description and lives up to the requirement of a well-composed haiku.

<sup>499</sup> See “haiku” in *Merriam Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature*.

can be acceptable as aesthetically compatible to the SP. Although there is no separating the choice of the haiku-like form, the influence of Imagism and the contribution of his creativity, the necessary element of the aesthetic achievement in the ST is the last. The substitution of the image of a blade of grass and the wording of “also” are from his creativity, with or without the influence of haiku and the context of Imagism, because there are other possible choices Pound could have adopted that can conform with the aesthetics of both the genre of haiku and Imagism.

The following critical comparison between Lowell and Rexroth will reveal that the subtlety and indirectness in the poestalt of the SP are two of the aesthetically vital elements of the SP that they fail to create as aesthetically compatible as Pound does, despite including many more details from the SP. The purpose of this critical comparison is to investigate how the concepts of the framework this thesis advances can be useful in critically reading a translation as innovative as Pound’s and in offsetting what Pound’s TP has achieved, as discussed just now.<sup>500</sup>

Lowell follows the SP much more literally than Rexroth. Comparing the gloss of the SP with the two translations in question, Lowell is literal to the extent that she

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<sup>500</sup> Therefore, the discussion will not continue to investigate whether and how the poestalts emerge from the TP’s by Lowell and Rexroth may in any way be aesthetically compatible to the SP.

almost keeps the translation of each character at its corresponding line.<sup>501</sup> Despite her historical context of Imagism, Lowell lavishes epithets and/or literality on almost each character she brings into the TP. However, these additions only damage the subtlety of the SP. For example, the one quality of the silk given in the first line, *su* (white), expands into “glazed,” “smooth” and “glittering.” *Ming* at line 4 of the SP is also rendered into a longer “brilliant” rather than an equally usable “bright.” This brings too many distractions from the hinted relation between the fan and the poet. The connotation of high visibility in “glittering” and “brilliant” is also contradicting the humble image that the poet tries to construct for her self. “Treasured” at line 5 of the TP and “the thing of love” at the last line claim an actual favoritism which is sufficiently hinted in “taken out, put in” of line 5. This also renders the poet a person too confident to be appropriate for her status. The imperatives, “wave, shake it,”<sup>502</sup> at line 6 promises a greater result than the implication of mere acceptability that “a little” connotes. *Wei* by itself may mean “a little” but its connotation in the context of *feng* to form a bi-character phrase meaning “breeze” is missed here. While line 6 produces an impression that it is not tragic but reasonable for such a merely usable

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<sup>501</sup> For example, Rexroth moves *wan* (i.e. silk) at line 1 of the SP to line 2 in his TP while Lowell keeps it at line 1 in hers.

<sup>502</sup> Apparently a literal translation of its counterpart, *dong yao*. This literalness to each character is an aesthetically problematic decision, as shown in the discussion, even though it is more or less coherently carried out in this TP. The same situation happens here with “*wei feng*.” The bi-character phrase can be literally translated into “breeze,” which is as majorative. Instead, Lowell chooses to render them separately into “*wei*” (a little) and “*feng*” (wind) under this principle. The preceding dash, supposedly foreshadowing a great use in the fan, is only contradicting by the mere satisfactory result. Its correspondence with the “a little” in the last line only seems to imply that the fan, therefore the poet, deserves the desertion since it is next to being useless.



thing to be discarded, the long string of accusive and self-pitying “discarded,” “passed by,” “laid in” and “cast off,” on the other hand, cry out too loud about the tragedy. There are too many dots of incoherent significance in the TP by Lowell that renders poestalts from her TP, if there is any, aesthetically incompatible to that of the SP.

On the other hand, the style of Rexroth’s TP is more undertoned and succinct than Lowell’s, corresponding better with that of the SP. However, the poestalt of Rexroth’s SP is still aesthetically incompatible to the SP. This results from different problems from those in Lowell’s case. Fristly, the persona show herself explicitly in his TP, unlike Lowell’s, in half of the sentences. The contextual relation of antithethis between “I” and “you” is carefully balanced in the first and fourth sentences respectively and the two sentences forms a parallelism.<sup>503</sup> This results in a Yin-Yang relation between the fan and the fan maker contrary to that in the SP. The relation flips over like a fan and the fan maker is always on the Yang side (the front, the dominant, the focus) along with the “you” while the fan is on the Yin side (the back, the subordinate, the background). The poestalt in this TP is a story explicitly about “I” and “you,” and it is aesthetically incompatible the that of the SP, which is a story about the fan with the fan maker behind it. Secondly, confusions in appallation and in

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<sup>503</sup> Sentence one includes lines 1-4; sentence two, line 5; sentence three, line 6; sentence four, lines 7-10.

whom the narration in the poem is directed toward render the GAP ineffective. In the first four lines, the giver of the fan seems to speak directly to the receiver of the fan, either in her mind only or in an actual occasion. However, there is an incongruity in the fifth line. For the giver suddenly turns to a third person to talk about how the receiver, her Lord, does with the gift and then immediately in the next line turns back to the receiver. This confusion looks like the Situation II discussed in Chapter 5 on how reconstructing a GAP can come out aesthetically invalid. Some may argue that “my Lord” is an honorific for “you,” both referring to the same person. If this is the case, it will be more logical to use it at the first time when she addresses the person, i.e. at line 3, rather than using a more intimate term first, i.e. “you,” and then suddenly realizes the difference in their statuses and uses “my Lord” and then returning all at once to the former tone in the next line. In addition, there is an aesthetically incoherent consequence coming along with this problematic appellation. In the SP, with the fan at the centre of narration and the grammatical subject staying implicit, the fifth and sixth lines are descriptions of the status the fan enjoyed at first, as a sharp contrast to how it will be treated when the autumn arrives. In the TP, the description of the situation becomes lame with the receiver of the fan in a non-honorific appellation as the subject of the sentence because the sixth line then sounds like an instruction for any unspecific person of how to use a fan, which

certainly no one would need.

Although undertone is the key to the aesthetic achievement of the SP, Rexroth overdoes it in several places and renders it aesthetically incompatible to that of the SP. One of it is to use “store it away” for *qi juan*. The former is not only less emotionally charged than the latter, but is even implying “to put away for future use.” This connotation is aesthetically incoherent with the desertion brought up in the next line. An obvious replacement would be “leave it behind,” which fit more aesthetically coherently into the picture. In the SP, the last line is the one where the poet explicitly related herself with the Emperor emotionally through wording and ends the poem with an emotional climax. In Rexroth’s translation, this revelation in the last line is undertoned by literally diminishing the Emperor’s love to that for the fan. After all the drama accumulated in the preceding lines, this seems anticlimax compared to its counterpart in the SP.



## Conclusion

It is ironic that, in the poetry translation and its criticism where a poem is to be translated into a poem, what can be missed is the poetry in the SP and the TP. In other words, the criticism can be dealing with anything in a TP except what makes it a compatible poem to the SP. An issue then becomes crucially relevant: what makes poetry poetry. The concepts of strangeness and mimesis, which can be traced back to ancient Greek, cannot explain why “a(l)” and “The Eagle” are both poetry. It is in the holism advanced by Pope that it is like the beauty in a face that needs to be admired holistically the poems find a common ground as poetry. In Chinese literary tradition, the issue has been investigated with holism as keynote: poetry is regarded as something lying holistically beyond the text. A basic ground for both poetry tradition and therefore this framework emerges: poetry is something holistic that emerges from between the lines. To read between the lines means to read the relations between the constituents of the text, i.e. reading for aesthetic potential in contextual relations formed between the constituents in a poem and any elements related to it. With a close reading of the fifth character “*chun*” in the fifth line of the last poem of Du Fu’s “*Qiu Xin*” and an overview of *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, the thesis showed that a wide range of elements from a word to the cultural context can form between them

contextual relations that are aesthetically potential.

The concepts investigated by Gestalt Theory, on the other hand, offer a skeleton for the framework to develop upon. With Maier and Reninger's model as a blueprint, the psychological framework is introduced as the vertebra of the poetry version of the model. With modification based on the differences between poetry and visual art, the psychology-oriented model was tailored into a poetry-oriented one for further development. The four steps of Maier and Reninger's model, i.e. 1) mess of stimuli, 2) artist's interpretation, 3) artist's Symbols and 4) reader's interpretation, evolved into the following corresponding four steps, i.e. 1) stimuli and echoes, 2) choosing, organizing and envisioning, 3) the embodiment—the Translation and 4) a new cycle and beyond. Applied to Wang Wei's "*Niao Ming Jian*," it demonstrated how potential contextual relations can form, evolve into different readings, generate different poestalts, and end in different TP's. With a critical comparison of the two TP's, it was shown how this framework functions in examining whether and how the poestalts in the TP are compatible to that of the SP as well as what a relevant translational criticism should be.

Furthermore, this framework shed light on three critical issues in poetry translation. Firstly, the significance of GAP between contextual relations and the importance of aesthetic coherence in TP. The thesis developed the concepts of GAP

and aesthetic coherence through investigating different situations in reproducing the Kanisza Triangle. Different types of deviation in the arrangement of the reproduced triangle caused different types of detriments to the emergence of the phenomenon when the arrangement is not mediated with the non-existent triangle seen in the original diagram. This embodied the concepts of GAP and aesthetic coherence concerning poetry translation. For a TP to produce an aesthetically compatible poestalt to that of the SP, the contextual relations in the TP need to be aesthetically coherent to one another with the poestalt seen in the GAP in the SP as the mediator before any poestalt can emerge from it. The case study of translating “Q” demonstrated that different poestalts seen in the SP can each be a mediator in translation and bring out different TP’s. The case study of “*Tao Hua Yu Jing Xia*” demonstrated that even an element as alien to the SP as an incident in the translator’s personal life can be effective in forming in the TP a poestalt aesthetically compatible to that of the SP when it can fit into the TP aesthetically coherently. The critical comparison of three TP’s of “*Jing Ye Si*” showed that the TP’s are aesthetically compatible to the SP when the GAP’s in them are designed to bring forth an aesthetically compatible poestalt, more than simply reproducing the constituents and the concrete features of the text.

Secondly, the significance of creative involvement of the reader/translator to



poetry translation. There are two basic ways in which a reader/translator can be involved creatively in poetry translation. One is a top-down approach of constructing an AAP (approach for aesthetic potentials) to view the work for poestalts. By demonstrating several new and elaborated ways to look at the Rubin Vase, the thesis showed that even choosing a viewing approach involves the imagination, the associating faculty and the background of the viewer. This demonstrated that the activity involves more than choosing but also constructing an AAP. An effective AAP will lead the reader/translator to more contextual relations that form GAP's for new poestalt to be possible, as demonstrated in a new translation of "Q." The other is a bottom-up approach of connecting DOS in the poem into aesthetically effective contextual relations. As in the dot-linking game, reader/translators apply their creativity in linking the DOS more significant to him/her to find aesthetically effective contextual relations. It calls even more loudly for creativity when a reader/translator means find new poestalts in a well read poem by assigning new DOS and forming new contextual relations, such as Vendler's Couplet Tie for reading Shakespeare's sonnets. To demonstrate the potentiality here, the thesis expanded the encompassment of Couplet Tie and turned it into Cluster Tie, with which the thesis brought out new poestalt from Sonnets 71 to 75. In addition, a reader/translator may try a new AAP they construct and connect DOS's in a new way

at the same time, a process termed as MAP, demonstrated by how the Duck-Rabbit Head with an extra dot may change its looks when the viewer decides what is included into consideration and modulates and arranges the dot and other constituents. A critical comparison between the translation collections of Han Shan by Waley and Watson demonstrated what happens when both the choice and arrangement of the poems (DOS) and how the poet is viewed (AAP) are open to the translator's MAP. The thesis pointed out that, when criticism is concerned, two relevant targets are the aesthetic coherence in the TP and the aesthetic compatibility to the SP, rather than simply the differences caused by different choices of DOS, AAP and MAP between translators.

Thirdly, the nature of contextual relation and the sophisticated mutually replacing relationship between norm and aberration between contextual relation and poestalt. Contextual relations form aesthetically effective GAP dynamically or statically. Parallelism, rhythm and rhyme, three of the most typical and important contextual relations in poetry, are dynamic examples while cultural context is one of the most typical and important static ones. But, the complication is that this status is fluid. Recurring dynamic contextual relations may become a static background while, such as when rhyming becomes a rhyme scheme, static contextual relations may become dynamic when exception happens. The poestalt emerges from the poem can

also be made up of poestalts as well as contextual relations read during the process. Any change in the process will lead to different development of this egg-chicken relationship between contextual relation and poestalt. There are kaleidoscopic possibilities to recreate an aesthetically compatible poestalt in the TP. Huang Kesun's *rubaiyat* and the critical comparison of the translations of "*Yuan Ge Xing*" by Pound, Lowell and Rexroth demonstrate two strategies of a reader/translator that deal with this dynamism. They represented two opposite approaches: Huang's, an outer-in approach that set up a system of contextual relations as complicated as the SP while Pound's, an inner-out approach, that starts from the poestalt aimed at and uses a minimal set of contextual relations. Both demonstrated how the poestalt read in the SP can be the central modulator of the translating process, and show the significance of aesthetic compatibility in poetry translation despite the linguistic and cultural incommensurability. A reader/translator may have sorted out the equilibration and articulation of contextual relations and planned a TP that generates a potential compatible poestalt.

In a word, to read a poem as a poem is, like looking at a gestalt diagram and seeing the gestalt, to read for the poestalts emerging from the contextual relations potential in it. To translate a poem as a poem is to translate the poestalt read from the SP and recreate an aesthetically compatible poestalt in the TP. Therefore, the



criticism of poetry translation should focus on the aesthetic compatibility of the poestalts in the SP and the TP. The incommensurability of language and culture is a fact. The thesis showed that, to poetry translation, it is not an issue that will leads to more constructive and relevant criticism than the issue of aesthetic compatibility between the SP and the TP. As the framework this thesis proposed is useful in embodying different ways in which a poestalt may emerge from contextual relations, it is also useful in translational criticism since the poestalts emerging from the SP and the TP are the object of this activity and their compatibility is what the activity is going to find out. Through this framework, the SP and its TP's can be read and compared truly as poetry.

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## Appendix 1:

Empty Hills

By Louise Ho

Not a soul in this emptiness among the hills,  
Yet there are human voices resounding.  
Deep into the Forest,  
A shaft of sunlight bathes again  
The green green moss.

(Ho, "Four Tang Poems" 28)

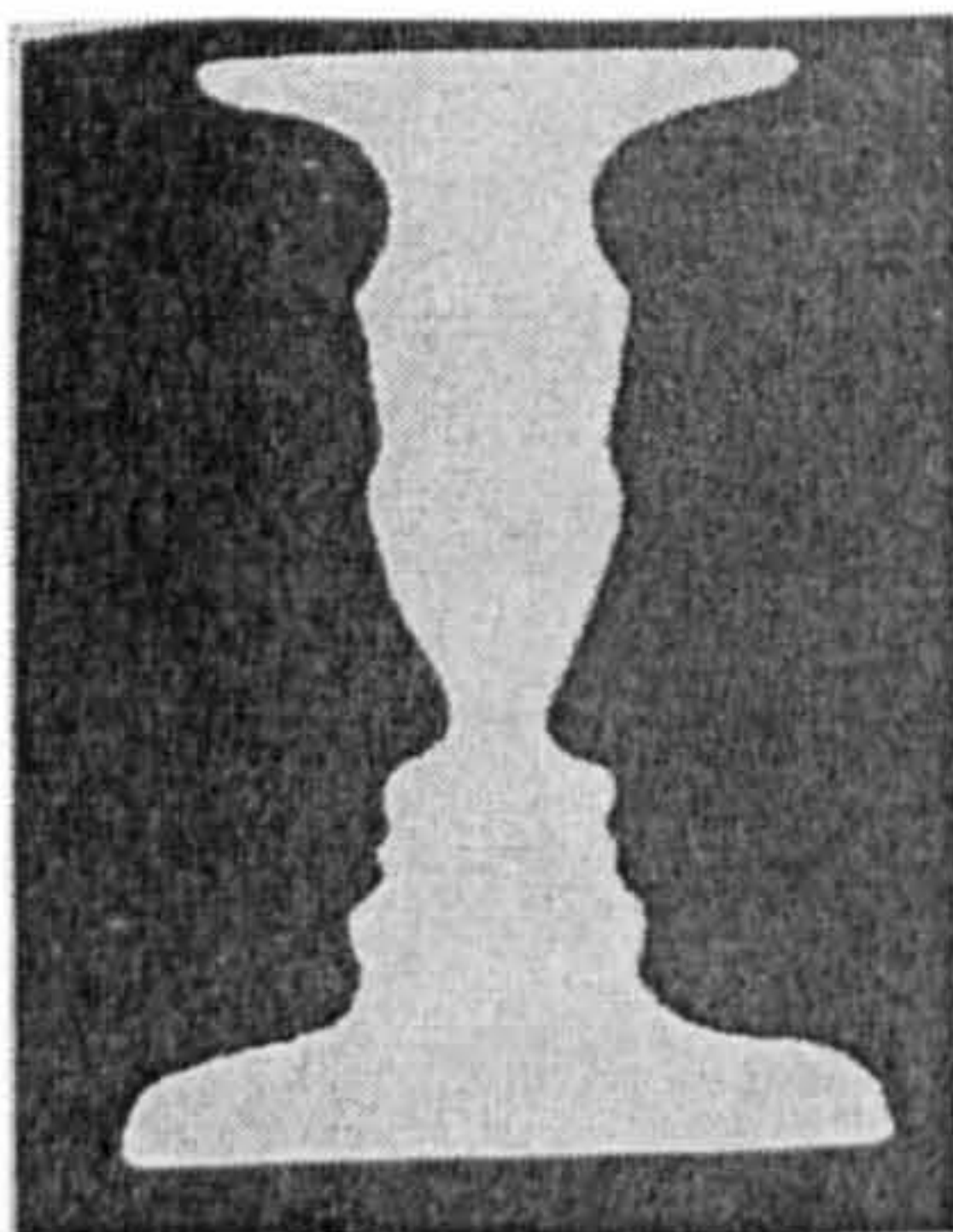
With the awkward syntax in the opening line and wording like "deep into... bathes," an personified "shaft of sunlight," the color of the moss overly highlighted, this possibly the latest translation would present an very different poestalt, if there is any aesthetic coherence here, from Wang Wei's.



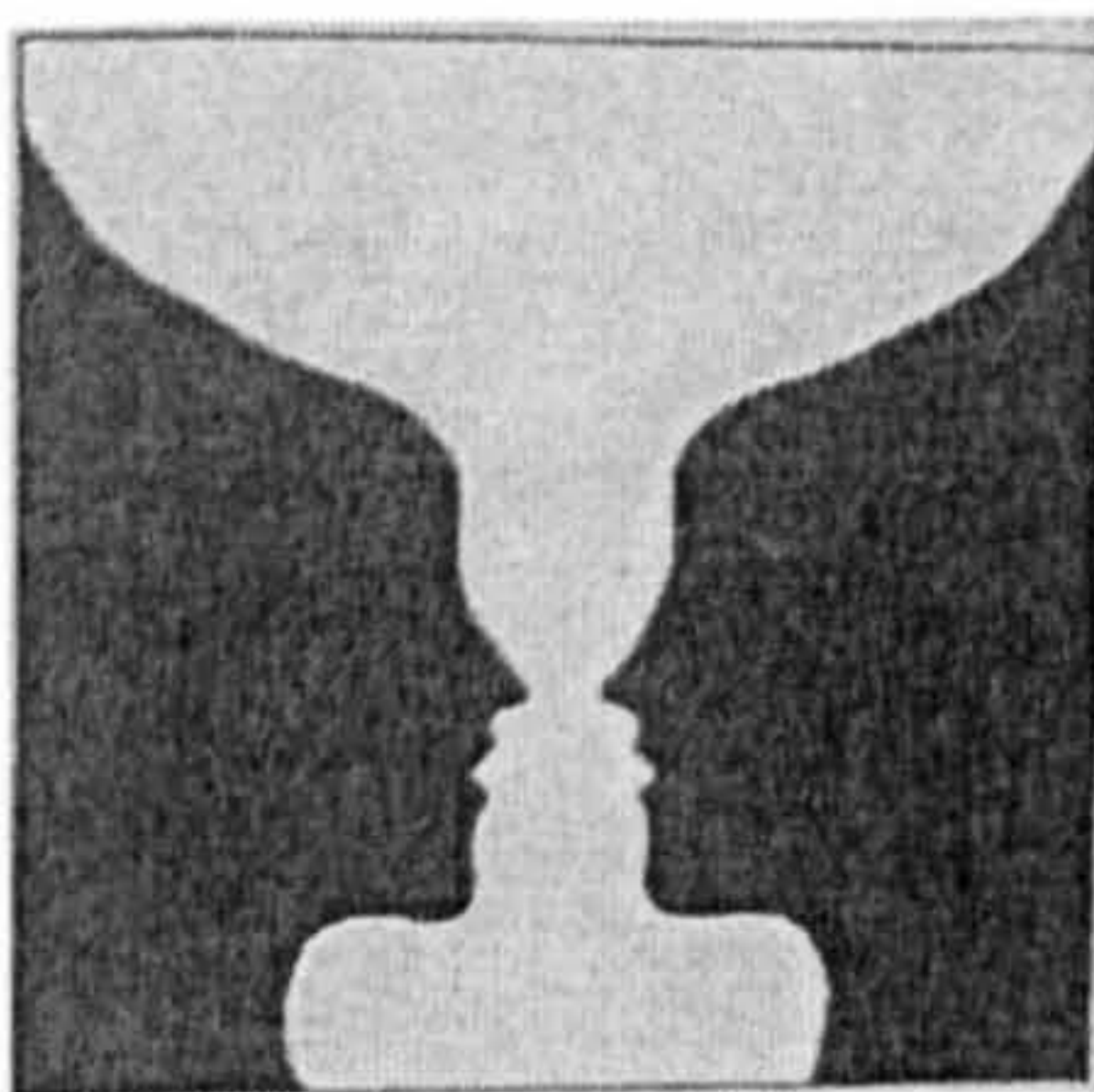
## Appendix 2:

“Rubin analyzed visual perception in terms of its two basic components, figure and ground. *Figure* is that which one pays attention to, which has a “thingness” [sic] about it; *ground* is that formless, less conspicuous extent upon which the figure is seen. Rubin’s phenomenological analysis of figure-ground relationships and his demonstrations, the phenomenologist’s experimenta cruces, of the role of attention in the perception of ambiguous, figure-ground reversal pictures ... made his work eminently suitable material for Gestalt-theoretical analysis.” See “Rubin, Edgar John” in *Biographical Dictionary of Psychology*.

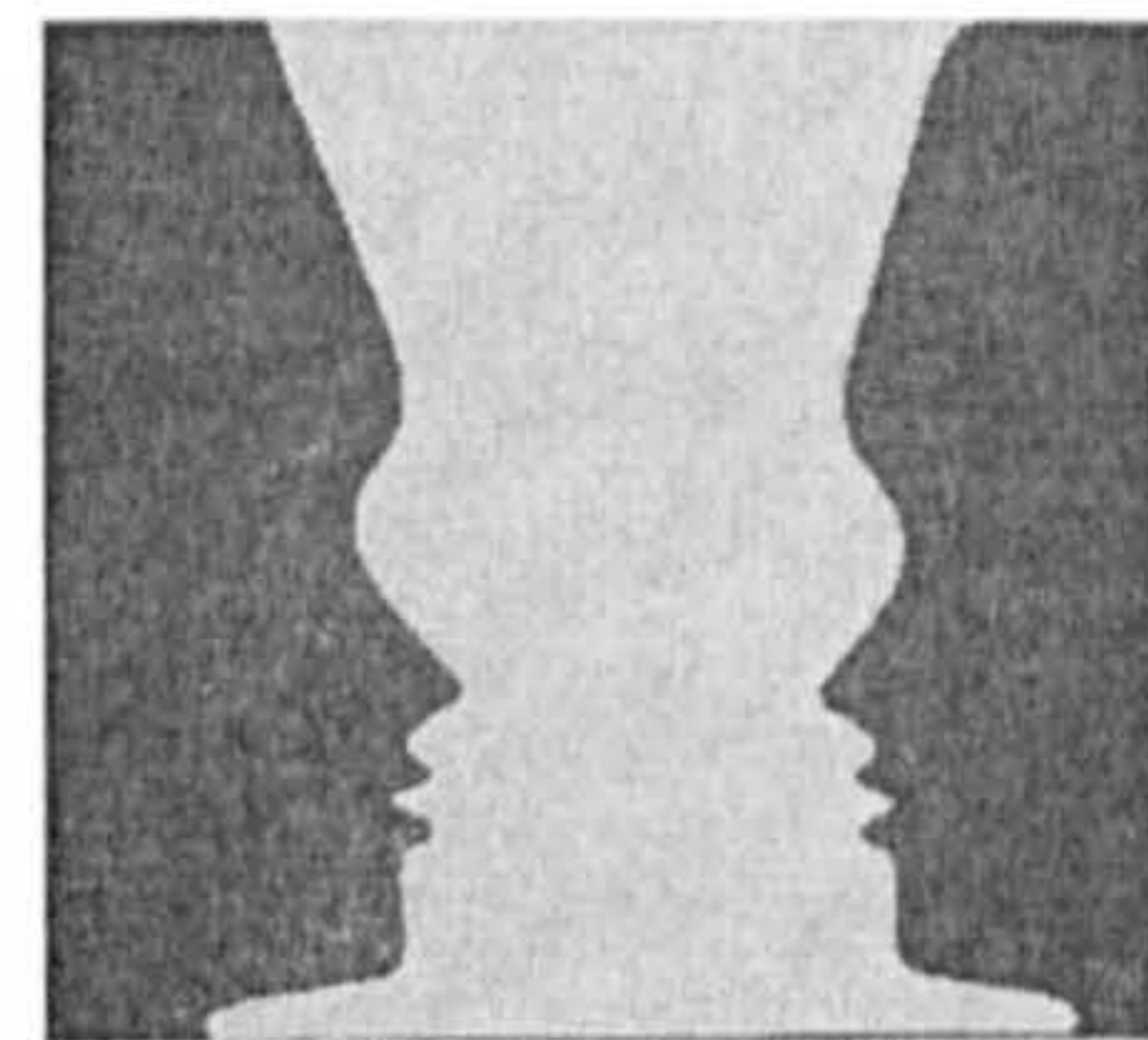
The following are several examples of Rubin Vase. It is clear that not all of them can produce the association offered in the thesis.



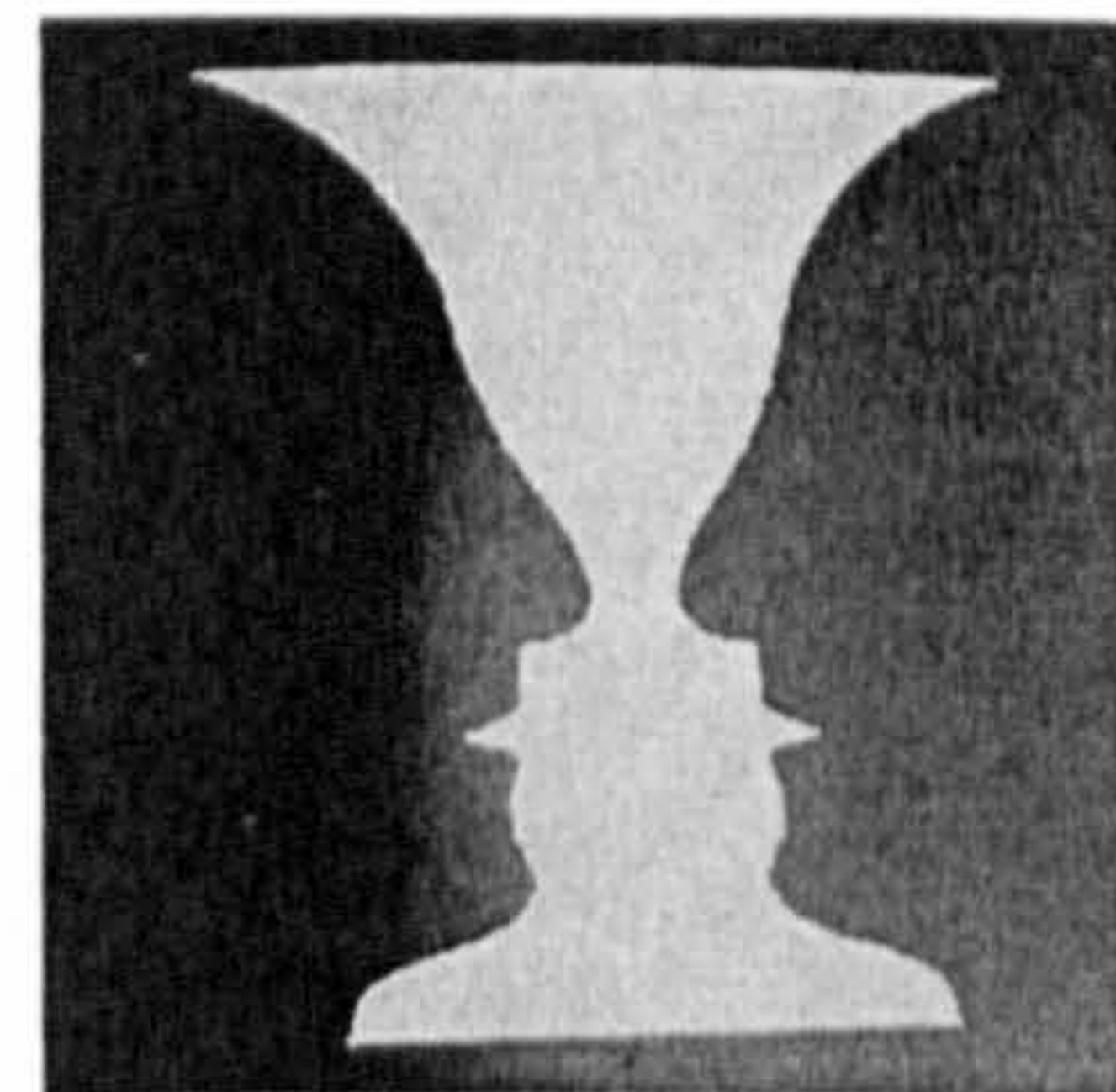
(Boothe 227)



(Bruce 107)



(Fineman 115)

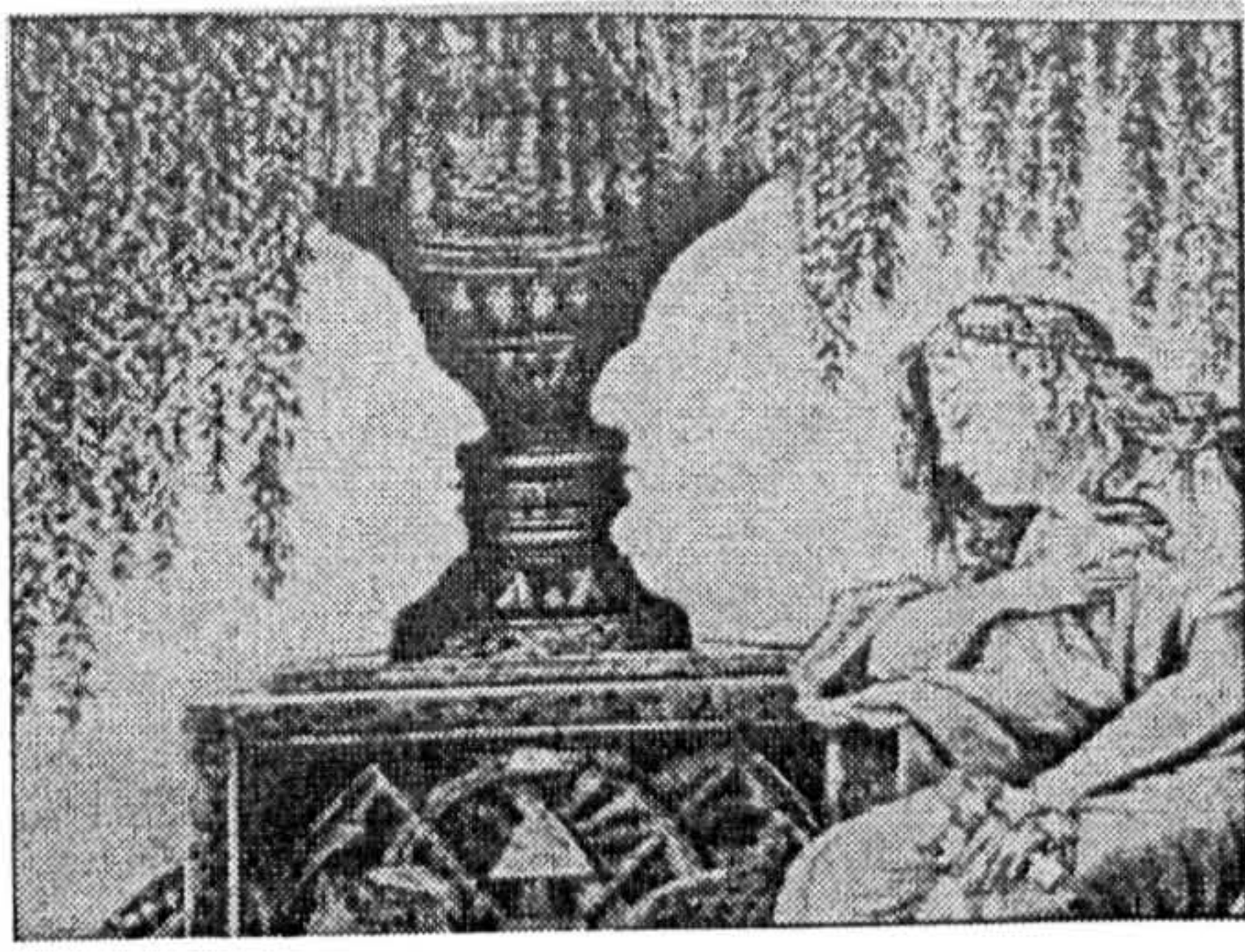


(Gregory, *Artful* Plate 3)



(Gregory, *Mind* 340)





(Spillmann 27)

Among all of them, this last one

present an interesting issue. While this one is the most elaborated in the Rubin Vase's offered here, this vase itself can arouse the least association since its context is fixed and fully developed already. More sometimes means less.

## Appendix 3:

71

No longer mourn for me when I am dead  
 Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell  
 Give warning to the world that I am fled  
 From this vile world with vildest worms to dwell; 4  
 Nay, if you read this line, remember not  
 The hand that writ it, for I love you so,  
 That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,  
 If thinking on me then should make you woe. 8  
 O if (I say) you look upon this verse,  
 When I (perhaps) compounded am with clay,  
 Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,  
 But let your love even with my life decay, 12  
     Lest the wise world should look into your moan,  
     And mock you with me after I am gone.

(Vendler 326)

72

O lest the world should task you to recite  
 What merit lived in me that you should love,  
 After my death (dear love) forget me quite,  
 For you in me can nothing worthy prove; 4  
 Unless you would devise some virtuous lie  
 To do more for me than mine own desert,  
 And hang more praise upon deceased I  
 Than niggard truth would willingly impart: 8  
 O lest your true love may seem false in this,  
 That you for love speak well of me untrue,  
 My name be buried where my body is,  
 And live no more to shame nor me nor you: 12  
     For I am shamed by that which I bring forth,  
     And so should you, to love things nothing worth.

(Vendler 330)

73

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,



Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang. 4  
 In me thou seest the twilight of such day  
 As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
 Which by and by black night doth take away,  
 Death's second self that seals up all in rest. 8  
 In me thou seest the glowing of such fire  
 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
 As the death-bed whereon it must expire,  
 Consumed with that which it was nourished by. 12  
 This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,  
 To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

(Vendler 333)

74

But be contented when that fell arrest  
 Without all bail shall carry me away,  
 My life hath in this line some interest,  
 Which for memorial still with thee shall stay. 4  
 When thou reviewest this, thou dost review  
 The very part was consecrate to thee:  
 The earth can have but earth, which is his due;  
 My spirit is thine, the better part of me. 8  
 So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,  
 The prey of worms, my body being dead,  
 The coward conquest of a wretch's knife,  
 Too base of thee to be rememberèd: 12  
 The worth of that is that which it contains,  
 And that is this, and this with thee remains.

(Vendler 337)

75

So are you to my thoughts as food to life,  
 Or as sweet seasoned showers are to the ground;  
 And for the peace of you I hold such strife  
 As 'twixt a miser and his wealth is found: 4  
 Now proud as an enjoyer, and anon  
 Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure;  
 Now counting best to be with you alone,  
 Then bettered that the world may see my pleasure: 8  
 Sometime all full with feasting on your sight,  
 And by and by clean starved for a look;



Possessing or pursuing no delight

Save what is had, or must from you be took.

12

Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,

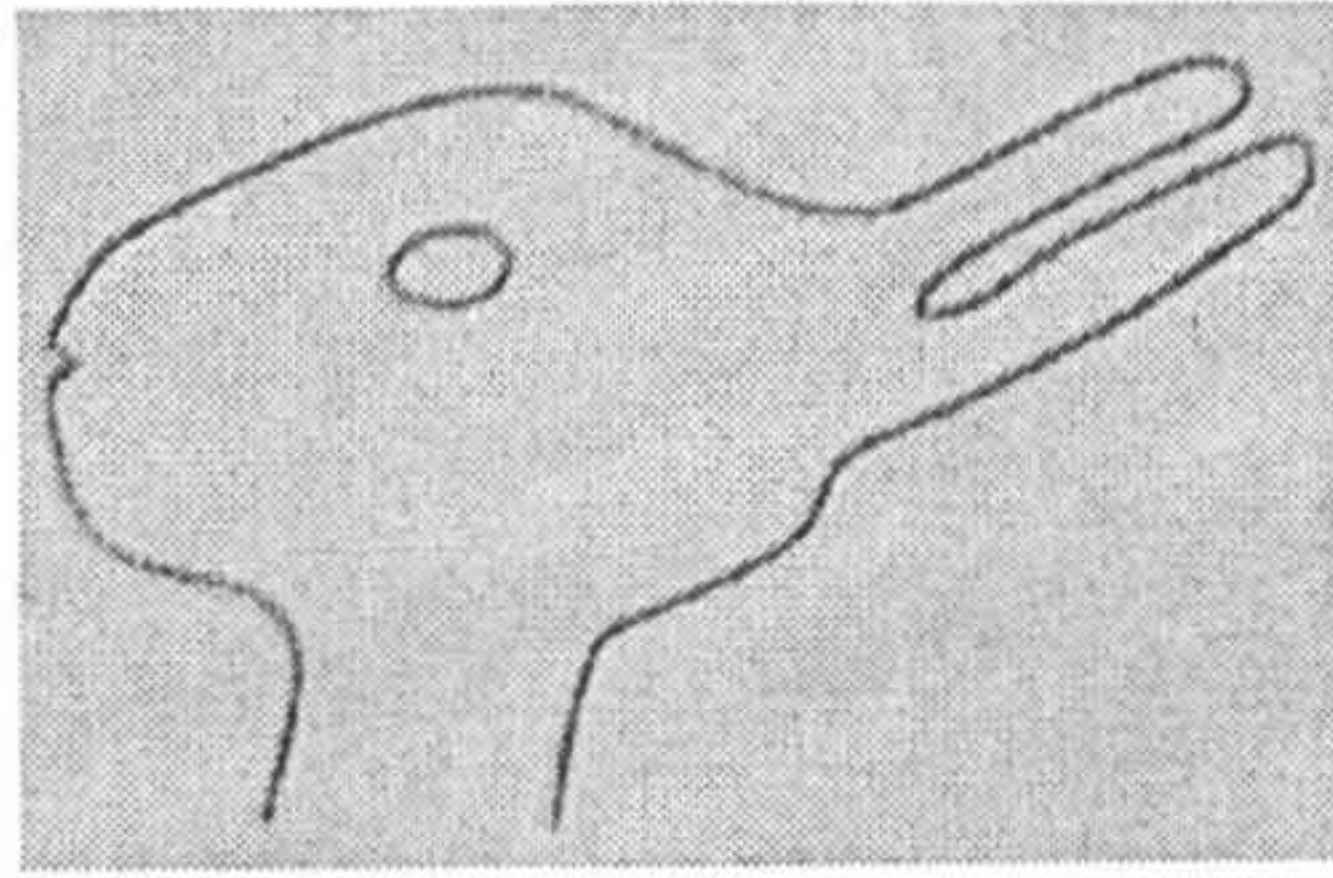
Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

(Vendler 341)

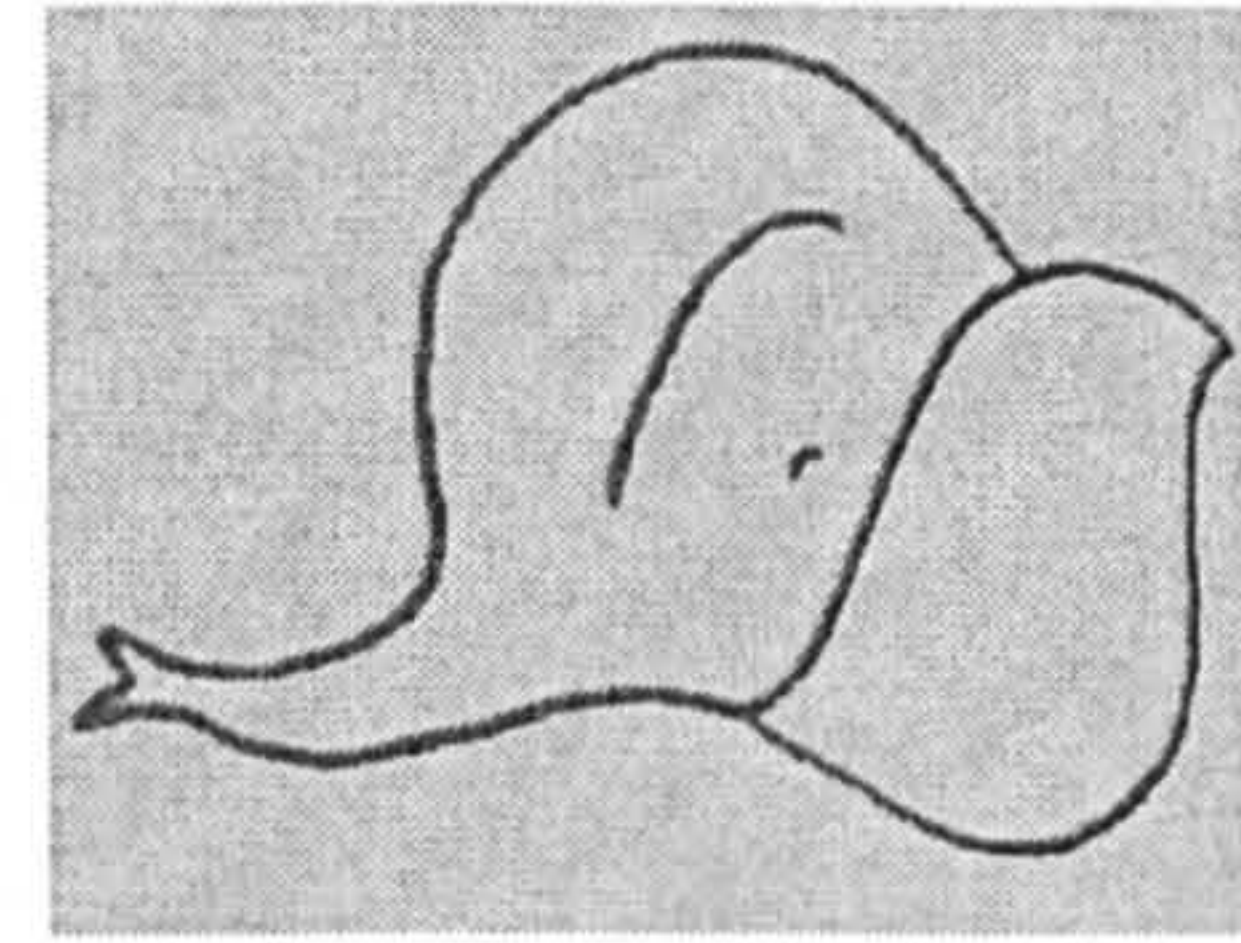


## Appendix 4

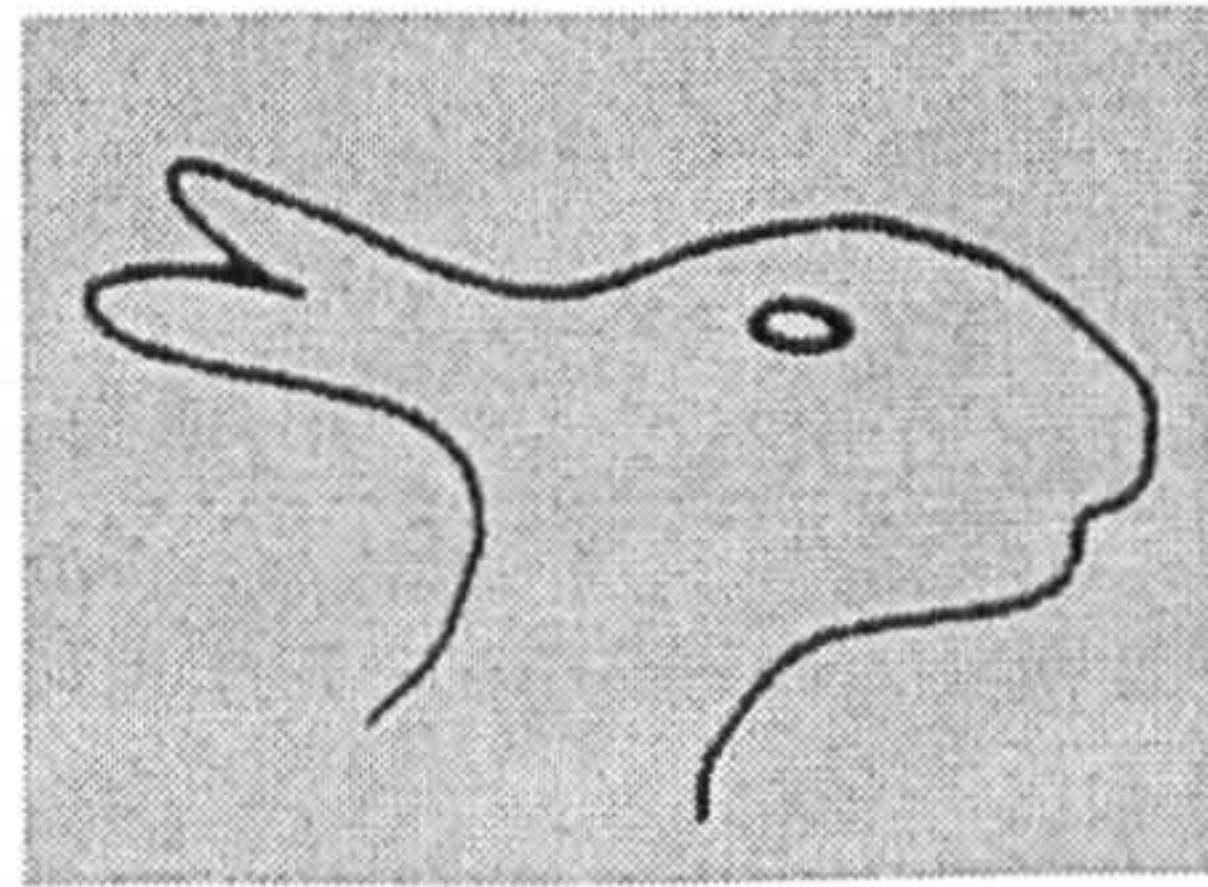
Below are several versions of Duck-Rabbit Head:



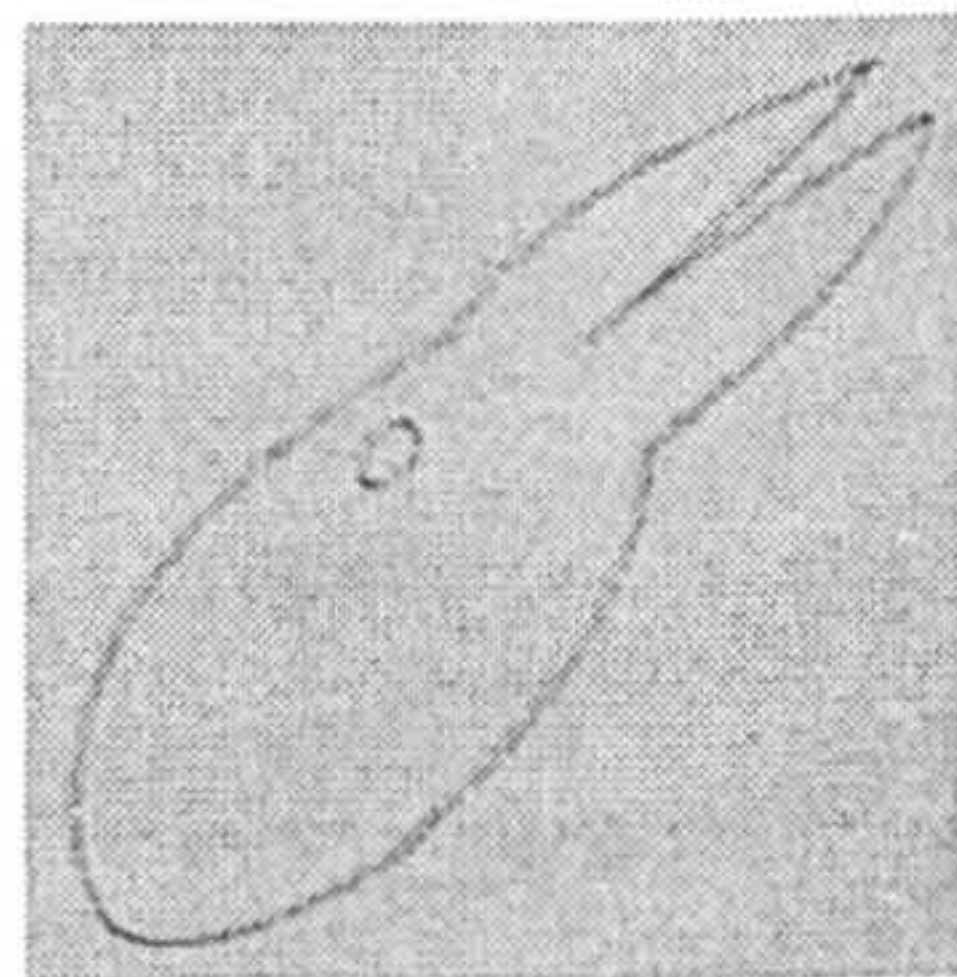
(Enns 323)



(Pylyshyn 348)



(Pylyshyn 348)



(Bruce 180)

The last version, though claiming to be a duck-rabbit head, is vaguer than all the rest illustrated here as duck-rabbit head with less details provided (without a neck and rabbit's mouth) and simpler in drawing (the line are smoother and less descriptive).

There are many designs of double image. The following diagram is a one of an elephant's head looking to the left and a snail with the nose of the elephant as its head.



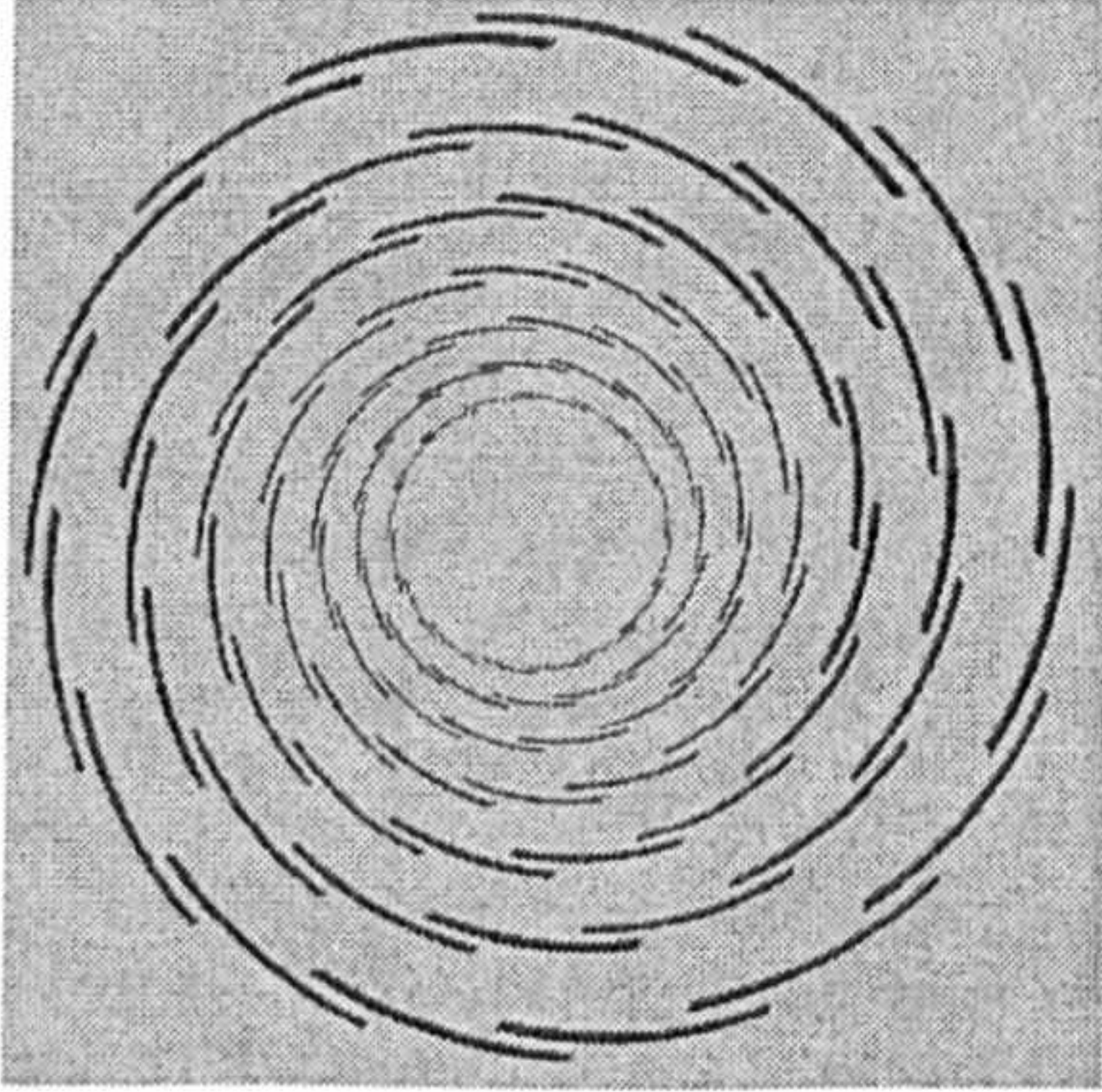
(Rock 167)

The simpler Duck-Rabbit head is adopted for the argument in the thesis because it is the mechanism of how the message is processed that the thesis is concerned, not the input its self.



## Appendix 5:

Here is a version of Fraser Spiral.  
Without the anemone background, the  
spiral effect becomes too vague to be  
apparent.



(Boothe 248)